

GAO'S STUDY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

JOINT HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PARKS,
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RECREATION
OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
AND THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND LANDS
OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
ON THE
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE'S STUDY OF THE
NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

MARCH 7, 1995



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GAO'S STUDY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 1995

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PARKS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND
RECREATION OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND LANDS OF THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES,

Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met jointly, pursuant to notice, at 9:33 a.m. in room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Craig Thomas, chairman of the Senate subcommittee, and Hon. James V. Hansen, chairman of the House subcommittee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CRAIG THOMAS, U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING

Senator THOMAS. I'm sure Chairman Hansen and some of his House members will be here shortly, and when they come, we will give them a chance to make any comments that they choose.

I want to first of all welcome all of you here. Thank you very much for coming. Mr. Chairman, nice to see you here this morning, the Senator from Montana.

We will just alternate back and forth between the members of the House and the Senate whenever anyone's here. Let me make just a very brief comment and then the others would like to as well.

Certainly, we look forward to your testimony. There are a number of factors which contribute, I think, to the difficulties in the ill-health of the National Park System. The rapid growth and expansion has certainly taken its toll.

As you know, I have the pleasure of representing Wyoming and of course, the home of the first national park, and have had a first-hand, I think, look at the parks by having grown up right outside of Yellowstone, between Yellowstone and Cody, so from that standpoint—and we have the other parks as well—I am very interested in it.

Yellowstone is a good example of some of the troubles that we do have. The range there is overgrazed. The population of elk and bison are both causing problems, and some consider it to be out of control. Some are escaping over into Montana, and a number of them are getting shot as they do that. There is a \$300 million backlog in highway needs there as well as other places.

So there are some problems along the way. Good morning, Jim.

When you add the fact that the taxpayers, of course, have paid over \$7 million with more to come. To reintroduce wolves there at the same time that we have difficulties with the other services, it is a little tough to figure that out, and we are having some problems with that.

As you know, I also have the pleasure of replacing and taking the seat of Senator Wallop, who has been very involved with the Park Service and, indeed, was one of the persons that asked for the study that you all have done.

He also left with me, I think about a 7-hour discourse with respect to the California desert, which goes into great detail about some of the problems that we will be talking about here today.

So it does appear that the National Park Service is in need of some strong medicine, and I hope that through the year we will be able to do some of those things, much of it based on the study that you have and the report that you will be making today. So we are pleased to have you here.

It is good to have you, Mr. Chairman, my old friend from the House. We thought we would just have some opening statements if we would like, and we will rotate back and forth, and go right ahead.

[The prepared statement of Senator Thomas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CRAIG THOMAS, U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING

I would like to welcome Chairman Hansen and my good friends from the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Lands to this first joint hearing in recent history. I have to tell my friends that when I left the House I never thought we would all be attending the same hearing again.

I believe a little house, or in this case, "Senate keeping" is in order. If Chairman Hansen is in agreement, what I propose to do, is start with a round of quick opening statements alternating between the Senate and House Members and at the same time alternating between Majority and Minority Members. Then I suggest we proceed to the testimony of the General Accounting Office and then move to questions from the respective Subcommittee Members along the identical procedures that we will use during the period of opening statements. The only exception would be that I would like to limit Members questions to a period not to exceed five minutes. We will go to as many rounds as necessary to accommodate any Members' desires.

If everyone is agreed we can proceed, keeping in mind that the appearance of more powerful chairmen could result in the rearrangement of this artfully crafted system.

There is one other item. I am sure some are wondering why the National Park Service is not testifying today. The reason they are not is because the GAO report is not final and will not be issued until June. I felt that it would be unfair to have the NPS respond to an investigation when they did not have sufficient advanced notice of the findings in the report. They will have an opportunity at a later date.

I have a brief opening statement and then we can proceed to Chairman Hansen.

While there are several factors which contribute to the current ill-health of the National Park System, the rapid growth and expansion of existing units has certainly taken its toll. I have the pleasure of representing Wyoming and the home of the first National Park and have had a first-hand opportunity to witness the degradation of Yellowstone's resources. I was raised right outside the east gate of the park, so my concern about the Service has been around for a long time.

The range is overgrazed, the elk population is out of control, bison are leaving the park and getting shot in Montana, there exists a \$300 million backlog in road repair at Yellowstone, and now we are reintroducing wolves to a system that is completely unnatural in order to restore the natural balance. There is something fundamentally wrong with this picture.

When you add the fact that the taxpayer will pay a little over \$7 million to reintroduce wolves in just the Park Service accounts, no one knows how many millions of dollars the Fish and Wildlife Service will spend for animals that would have shown up in Yellowstone by themselves, at no cost to the taxpayer, and without the assistance of the United States Government if we were just a little patient.

I also have the pleasure of holding the seat vacated by Senator Wallop, who as most of you remember, was a strong advocate of the National Park System. He spoke at great length to the issues involved when we keep adding new parks to an already over-burdened system. In fact, I inherited a seven hour unused floor statement on the California Desert which goes into the problems in greater detail. It should come as no surprise to anyone that the floor statement mirrors this report with the exception that I do not believe anyone was aware of the lack of information on which management decisions are made.

It appears the National Park Service needs some strong medicine. Throwing large sums of money at the NPS is only going to exacerbate an already broken system until we do something about accountability.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES HANSEN, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM UTAH

Mr. HANSEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Thomas. It is good to be with you again, and it is good to see you.

I appreciate being with you today at this historic joint House-Senate hearing on the health of the park system. Based on what I have learned in the few short months since taking over the House Parks Subcommittee, the task before us to restore the integrity of the park system is a daunting one, one which will require the combined efforts of all of us in Congress and the administration.

About 1 month ago, I held a joint hearing with the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee on National Park Service financial management. At that hearing, members from both subcommittees heard first-hand from the GAO and the Interior Inspector General that the National Park Service has no system to ensure that appropriated funds are directed to the highest priority agency needs, was not spending funds in the manner directed by Congress, and could not even balance its own books.

The testimony today—that the Park Service cannot even assure Congress that it is meeting its fundamental agency mission to conserve the most important natural and cultural resources of this country is even a greater revelation. Further, while the ever-decreasing level of visitor services and parks is a fact well-known to many, the reasons for this decline in light of substantial funding increases remains a mystery to me.

Mr. Chairman, based on these two reports, it appears to me that the National Park Service is an agency headed in the wrong direction, or more accurately, an agency without any direction. For too long, those of us in Congress and those in the executive branch charged with leading this agency have given it free rein. For the most part, Congress has responded to concerns about the Park Service largely by throwing more money and responsibilities at it. After all, who could argue with an agency whose mission is to protect Yellowstone and Yosemite, an agency which, according to poll after poll, was among the most popular in the Federal Government?

The result today is that we no longer have a single agency, but 368 independent kingdoms run by individual park managers. I do not take issue with these park superintendents, many of whom I have met and know to be excellent, hard-working employees trying to do their best for the parks. However, the approach of hoping that these employees will work together for the collective good of the entire park system has not seemed to work.

While Congress and leaders of the Department have focused on the brush fires in this agency, we have ignored the fuel buildup and potential for catastrophic wildfire. Intervention on a large scale is now essential to address the problems facing the Park Service. Such measures as the bill introduced by Congressman Hefley to reform the Park Service is a very high priority in my subcommittee.

I wish to extend my appreciation to Senators Murkowski and Wallop for having the foresight to request this report. I believe this report represents a wake-up call. It is a wake-up call not just for those of us with policy responsibilities for the state of the park system, but a wake-up call for all Americans who care about the park system. The solutions needed are drastic and far-reaching, and it will take the combined effort of all of us to implement them.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, in that regard during the upcoming session. Thank you for allowing me this time.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you very much. We are pleased this morning to have the chairman of the full committee, and one of the persons who requested this study, to be with us.

Senator.

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA

The CHAIRMAN. Let me commend you, Senator Thomas, for your effort to bring this about. We are happy to have Representative Hansen here this morning, and I would hope that we can help communicate a message of frustration that is out there relative to the operation of our National Park System.

I think it is fair to say the concern expressed by most of the members is that the health of the Park Service is not very good. We are going to hear testimony from the General Accounting Office, and I think it is high time that we take the initiative to do something meaningful about it.

As I indicated, Senator Thomas, in your chairmanship of the Subcommittee of Parks and Historic Preservation and Recreation, the responsibility for addressing this is a significant one. The health of the Park Service, which is the topic of this hearing, I think really merits the attention of both our bodies, and that is why I am pleased to see House members here. I see there are more of them that have joined us.

Over the years, the mission of the Park Service has evolved in many directions. Perhaps that is part of the problem. On the other hand, it is clearly a problem and a responsibility of Congress, because much of that direction has resulted from this body's initiation. Unfortunately, the expansion of the system, along with the increased visitation, along with the unfunded mandates, has placed the National Park Service in a rather precarious position.

However, just throwing money at the problem is not the immediate answer. The problems are more fundamental. You cannot throw money at a system that has little or no accountability. It is very difficult to find accountability in certain park decisions that have been made in the past. You actually can, and we have, but the results are less than rewarding as we look back at some of the mistakes that have been made. Tossing dollars into a system which

lacks information on its resource, one which has little sense of priority setting, and one where it appears everyone is in charge, is a predictable waste of money.

For years, we have been told that out of all the Government agencies, the National Park Service was one of the best, and I have long suspected that this was not totally true, and I watched the Park Service slowly become less visitor-oriented and more prone to lock it up to protect the Park Service resource.

Not many people chose to argue with that wilderness spirit, because most of the people believed the Park Service knew what it was doing, but as it turns out, as is often the case, it does not appear to know what it is doing.

Being from Alaska, I have been a strong advocate of access into the parks of Alaska. The parks, on the other hand, have done little to provide—I should say, the Park Service has done little to provide visitor access, and give the public an opportunity to enjoy and recreate in these parks, because the access is so lacking, and their fear is that if people get in they are going to damage the parks. We have a half-dozen parks it takes a \$5,000 bill to get into. You have got to be able to hire an aircraft to bring you in to afford the luxury of enjoying your wilderness experience, so it is a very tiny segment of the population that can afford that.

It is rather interesting to note that the Anchorage Zoo, which is 30 acres and about a 20-minute drive from your local hotel, was able to accommodate 160,000 visitors into its gate last year; and the No.1 tourist destination in Alaska, the 6½ million acre Denali National Park, was only able to accommodate 241,995 visitors into its gates, and turned away 249,154 people. Over 51 percent of the total number of people that visited the number 1 tourist destination in my State were turned away because of access. You must remember the season is only approximately 90 days.

Now, you would think that somewhere in the 6½ million acre park, the Park Service could find another access route, or at least begin to plan another access route to accommodate visitors. Unfortunately, all you hear is, "Increased traffic and visitation will harm wildlife."

I was meeting with some of the Park Service advisory group the other day and the comment was made, "We did not want this to turn into another Yellowstone." I pretty near threw them out of my office.

This report would indicate that not only can the National Park Service not tell you with any accuracy that increased traffic will be harmful to wildlife, they cannot even tell you if the current numbers have any effect on the resource. This is the state of their dilemma with regard to access into Denali.

So I am personally tired, Mr. Chairman, of the excuses of the Park Service for denying access to parks in my State, and after reading this report, I am here to tell you that I am even more tired of it.

I look forward to hearing from the General Accounting Office, and I particularly look forward to seeing how you, Chairman Thomas, bring the Park Service into an era of accountability. That era began with the election last year. I think it is unfortunate, Mr.

Chairman, that some folks do not seem to have gotten the message, but maybe it is up to us to try and reinforce that.

I look forward to a very worthwhile effort that you have initiated, and I commend you for it. Thank you.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to call on Mrs. Linda Smith from the State of Washington, a member of our committee.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LINDA SMITH, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM WASHINGTON**

Mrs. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to make this brief. I am new to Congress, and have sat through one of these hearings on the Park Service already and listened to a financial report of the management and then listened to others that are responsible for managing this resources, so vital.

My concern is that I have major parks in my State of Washington that have become very important to the tourism industry. We used to harvest timber as a crop, and now with the owl claiming most of that crop for their own, we have to rely on some other things. Tourism is it. We are finding crumbling of those parks, and I was told that the backlog was serious, but that that was told last year also, and the management was serious, the mismanagement, but that that has been an issue with just about every Congress now for the last several years.

And so I guess what I wanted to do is come here and hear more. The more I hear, the more it looks like I could assign the park service—if I were in the corporate world we would assign it to another management firm. In the judicial, we would assign a receiver to manage the Park Service, and it appears to me that we are at that level.

Maybe I am overresponding. Maybe what I have heard is not accurate, but it looks to me like we are in serious condition, and serious enough that we cannot come back next year to find out if something was done, for both the economy in my region, but also, our people like parks in the Northwest. We think they are valuable and important, and I want to find out how we are going to manage those better to make sure that we can honor that trust that they have given us.

So with that, I just plan on doing a lot of listening, and would love to hear some solutions to what I think is a crucial problem, and I think the patient is dying if we do not do something with it.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you.

The Senator from Montana.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CONRAD BURNS, U.S. SENATOR FROM
MONTANA**

Senator BURNS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for this hearing today, and I just would ask unanimous consent that my statement could be entered into the record.

Senator THOMAS. Without objection.

Senator BURNS. I want to get to the witnesses and hear their reports. I am just going to be listening about a couple of things, I guess, and we are going to talk about brucellosis, and we are going to talk about wolves. It does not make a lot of sense to me that

we spend \$12 million to reestablish wolves in Yellowstone Park when we have got substandard housing.

I do not see how a boss squares that with his staff, that you can spend \$12 million on wolves and then ask a guy to live in a shack that you can throw a cat through any direction. I will tell you one thing, I do not see how you hold any morale at all. I have never been very successful at that.

I noted the statement of our full chairman, Mr. Murkowski from Alaska, saying that it is adrift. I do not think it is adrift. I think they have got an agenda. I think they have got priorities. They are just different from good management, and so you cannot tell me they do not have an agenda, because I know damn well they do. They know exactly what they are doing, and that is why they want to turn Montana into a park, and that is why we are resisting, because we do not want to become one, and fall under that management.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good luck to you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Burns follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CONRAD BURNS, U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA

Mr. Chairmen, I would like to thank you both for calling this hearing on the changes that should be required by the National Park Service. This issue is very important to me and the people of the state of Montana. We in Montana, have always looked with pride upon the beauty, splendor and opportunities that the National Park System has brought to our state. However, we, more than most, are also aware of the declining health of the Parks in our nation, and particularly those in our backyard.

My state of Montana is a rural state which depends upon natural resources and agriculture for our prime sources of income. Fortunately, the tourism that the parks create in our neck of the woods, does allow a certain amount of diversity for our region. Although we do appreciate the parks for what they provide our state, we are also very concerned about what they bring with them to the area. Today I would like to address these areas of concern as they impact on the health and well-being of the number one industry in Montana.

Right now in Montana we face severe losses due to the actions and inaction of the Department of the Interior and the Park Service. The behavior of leaving the concerns of the neighboring public out of the process directly threatens the welfare and the number one industry in the state. The approach the Park Service has taken with respect to the introduction of Canadian Wolves into the park shows that they have no regard for their neighbors in the surrounding states.

In January and February of this year, the Department of the Interior introduced into Yellowstone National Park a pack of 14 Canadian Gray Wolves. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in conjunction with the National Park Service, has developed plans to expend approximately \$12 million to realize the goal of establishing ten mated pairs of wolves in the park during the next five years. All this at the same time that the basic living arrangements for the park staff are in the worst shape in years.

In addition, the Park Service is guilty of a lack of action in dealing with a diseased herd of Bison. This inaction shows an unwillingness on the part of the Park Service to face and deal with the brucellosis problem occurring within their boundaries. The state of Montana has been faced with requirements imposed by several states to test for a disease that has been eradicated from the state, with the cost of millions of dollars. The lack of effective communications between the various branches of the Park Service creates confusion in dealing squarely with the problem at hand. The Washington office will admit and face the fact that there is a problem, while in the field they state exactly the opposite conclusion. When the livestock industry in the state is being threatened, due to the inaction of the Park Service, I cannot understand how they can state that there is no problem with the herd in the Park.

I surely do not understand how the Park system has fallen into such disrepair. The gems of our Natural heritage are hopelessly drifting along. We spend too much money on superficial face-lifting measures with the Park Service. Before I put any-

more change in my pockets, I find the hole and repair it, and this is the course of action that we and the Park Service need to follow.

Mr. HANSEN. The former chairman of this subcommittee on our side, Mr. Vento from Minnesota.

Bruce.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE E. VENTO, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM MINNESOTA**

Mr. VENTO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to come back and greet our lost colleague who has taken over the Senate role here. I congratulate him and look forward to a positive relationship with those interested in the mission of the Park Service.

As most of the members here know, for the past 10 years, chairing the subcommittee and for almost 20 years working on the committee, I think I have familiarity with most of the issues.

I would ask unanimous consent to put Mr. Richardson's statement in the record.

I would just comment that the GAO has done I think a good job in its preliminary report here in terms of sampling 12 of the 368 parks to give us some insights.

The problems that they point out are the same problems that then-chairman, subcommittee Chairman Phil Burton charged the Park Service to identify, which were known as threats to the park, and the first report which came out in 1980, which I know this is not referenced in your footnotes, but we then built on that and pointed out the same problems, same backlogs, and the pressure, the increased use of the parks which has resulted, obviously, in the designation of sites as they become available in terms of the plans.

The increased use around the shoulders in seasons, the increased pressure, the lack of dealing with some of the deteriorating infrastructure, all point, I think, to the problems and the need to sort of refocus maybe some of the policies and talk about what there is dollars to do and is not dollars to do.

I think that the concerns, of course, such as access, and the debates around that, of course, are understandable, but clearly increasing numbers of people going to the parks just simply may compound the problem if the dollars are not there to serve the individuals, and I think we need to think about that. Many of the problems that exist are unique to parks. The problems in the Virgin Islands with tour ships visiting and the tremendous pressure on sanitation facilities under those circumstances are just some of the insights.

Each of them have unique problems. I think that the mission of the Park Service needs to be defined, redefined, and identified. I think that we all understand the American public happily still has, I think, a positive attitude with regard to parks. I think it is something that they strongly support, and hopefully in terms of crafting policy we will continue to keep that option a viable one and a workable one.

Much of the problem, I think, is in first of all the inadequate resources, and then the misuse of some of the resources through the earmarking process that has gone on in Congress, I might say on a bipartisan basis. It has not been one group over the other.

So I think there is much to be learned from what is stated here by the GAO. I think we need to look at what we are doing in terms of housing, what we are doing in terms of concessions that serve these where we actually engage the private sector, what we are doing in terms of partnerships.

We have obviously changed the focus of the Park Service greatly in the 75-plus years of its existence, and I think that as we move forward we are going to have to continue to do that.

I know there are many, many debates on specific topics of park policy, but I think most of us recognize they are probably best left to the professionals, not the politicians, in terms of some of those policies.

We provide plenty of guidance. This is an area where Congress has really been involved, I am sure, in many of the specifics, quite appropriately in the specifics of policy with regard to parks. It is not an area where we have neglected it. We have designated and identified and guided additions, and many of the policies that were in the Park Service.

I think the Park Service as a professional group does a remarkably good job, I think notwithstanding the fact that it does not fit the modern accountability or accounting procedures that have been put forth. I think as you look at individual parks and the superintendents, the autonomy that they have had has served the system fairly well.

Now we are in an era where there are suggestions and policies that want to change that. I understand that. I also think we ought to appreciate the task and the work that they do. Very often, I think they have to extrapolate and do the job on the ground, and I think the public would recognize, and most of us recognize they do a pretty good job for the dollars that are expended and the importance of the parks to the people of this country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Richardson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BILL RICHARDSON, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM
NEW MEXICO

Mr. Chairmen, reviews of the National Park Service and the National Park System by the GAO are not new. As appendix II of the GAO's testimony can attest, the GAO has been called upon many times by your predecessors to provide reports or testimony on these important subjects.

GAO interest in these matters thus should come as little surprise to anyone. However, I am surprised by the sweeping generalities of the GAO's statement. Based on a review of just 12 of the 368 national park units, they have drawn conclusions on the condition of the entire National Park System, the factors that lead to that condition, and the range of options that exist to correct these problems.

I doubt there is anyone in this room who doesn't like our national parks, although it seems that there were just such witnesses at last Thursday's Resource Committee oversight hearing. I welcome the GAO's input. Unfortunately, there are no quick fixes or easy outs to whatever problems the National Park System may have. The National Park System is far too important and the stakes too high to believe that somehow we can wave a magic wand and everything will be all right. Ultimately, Mr. Chairmen, the National Park System will only be as good as the commitment of the National Park Service, the American public, and we, their elected representatives to it. It is a responsibility that we can't pass off to a commission or any other body.

I appreciate having the GAO's viewpoint in this ongoing review of the National Park Service and the National Park System. As we move forward to address these matters, we will need input from many individuals and organizations if we are to craft workable, long-term policy for our national parks.

Mr. HANSEN. Mrs. Cubin from Wyoming.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA CUBIN, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM WYOMING**

Mrs. CUBIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief.

It is a particular honor for me to be at this hearing today with my friend Senator Thomas, whose service goes back with mine all the way to the State legislature. I am very proud to be here.

I have a lot of opinions about what is going on with the park system and the Park Service. However, before I came here, my father told me; nobody cares what your opinion is, everybody has one of their own. What people care about are facts, and so get the facts and then when you have those, that is the time for you to have something to say.

So all I want to say is that I am glad I am here. I am here to learn, as a freshman Congressman from Wyoming. There are seven National Park System units in my State—Yellowstone being the first national park, and Devil's Tower being the first national monument—so it is of huge interest to my State. I am here to learn, and I expect that I will be very active in working with the Park Service.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you very much. Just as a matter of interest, we are looking forward to some hearings on the criteria for establishing parks. We are looking forward to them on the fees. We are going to deal with the area of concessions and housing, so we look forward to your information in helping that.

So welcome, Mr. Duffus. Why do you not introduce your associates and then proceed as you choose.

STATEMENT OF JAMES DUFFUS III, DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES, RESOURCES, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE; ACCOMPANIED BY CLIFF FOWLER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES; PAUL STALEY, STAFF; NED WOODWARD, STAFF; AND CHERYL RUSTEN, STAFF

Mr. DUFFUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Messrs. Chairmen and members of the subcommittees, we are pleased to be here today to discuss conditions in the national parks. Our comments are based on work that we are doing for Chairman Murkowski and Senator Wallop within the park system as well as work that we have done over the years.

I will summarize by statement and ask that the entire statement be entered into the record. With me today are the team that worked on this assignment: Cliff Fowler to my immediate left, to his left Ned Woodward, and to his left Cheryl Rusten, and to my right Paul Staley, who is from our Seattle regional office.

The objectives of our current assignment are to determine what, if any, degradation in the level of visitor services or condition of park resources is occurring, identify factors contributing to any degradation, and identify choices available to help deal with identified problems.

Before getting into the results of our work, I would like to briefly provide some background. Despite the fiscal constraints facing all

Federal agencies, the number of parks continues to expand. Thirty-one parks have been added to the system in the last 10 years, bringing the total number of units to 368. In addition, estimates of the backlog of deferred maintenance at national parks has increased substantially from about \$1.9 billion in 1988 to over \$4 billion today.

Our current work has shown cause for concern about the health of the parks, both from the standpoint of declining visitor services and the condition of park resources. Of the 12 parks we visited, 11 had recently cut back on the level of visitor services.

For example, at the Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, last summer for the first time in 20 years, no lifeguards were on duty along the beach to help ensure the safety of swimmers. The beach is one of the primary attractions of the park.

At Lake Mead National Recreation Area in Nevada, during the summer months, park law enforcement personnel are often faced with a backlog of up to 12 calls in responding to health and safety needs of visitors.

Our work has also shown that while the condition and trend of many park resources is largely unknown, the condition of some cultural resources was declining. For example, Ellis Island was reopened in 1990 as the country's only museum devoted exclusively to immigration. While a portion of the Island's structures have been restored, 32 of 36 historic buildings are not available for public access, have seriously deteriorated, and about two-thirds of them could be lost within 5 years if they are not properly stabilized. However, the Park Service, by and large, has not collected the baseline data park managers need to enable them to detect damaging changes to the park's resources and guide the mitigation of those changes.

Managers at the culturally oriented parks we visited generally have greater knowledge about their resources than do those at parks that emphasize natural resources. Although the Park Service began efforts several years ago to gather better information about the condition of the park's natural resources, progress has been limited, and the completion of much of the work is many years away.

In the meantime, park managers often make decisions about the parks' operations without knowing the impact of those decisions on the resources. For example, at Yosemite National Park, after 70 years of stocking nonnative fish in various lakes and waterways, park officials realized that indiscriminate stocking had done more harm than good. As a result, according to park officials, the park's waterways have been compromised. Nonnative fish introduced into the park now outnumber native rainbow trout by 4 to 1.

According to park officials, this stocking policy, which continued until 1990, has also resulted in the decline of at least one federally protected species.

While many factors influence the level of visitor services and condition of park resources, our work identified two factors that were common to most of the parks we visited: additional operating requirements and increased visitation.

Park managers cited numerous requirements from over 20 different federal laws such as the Clean Air Act and the National En-

vironmental Policy Act. Park managers told us that meeting these requirements meant having to spread available funds across more park activities. Furthermore, because salaries and benefits are such a large portion of the parks' budgets, in some instances more than 80 percent, even small increases in these costs can diminish a park's ability to meet its need for visitor services and resource management.

For example, last year at Lake Mead, less than half of the cost of increased compensation for park rangers was met through budget increases, leaving an additional \$200,000 to be paid from the park's operating funds.

Eight of the 12 parks showed increases in the number of visitors, which is the second factor eroding parks' operating budgets. This drives up costs for visitor-related services.

Messrs. Chairmen, many of the problems we found during our current work are not new. Dealing with these problems calls for making difficult choices about how parks are funded and managed, some of which may require legislative changes.

First, because substantial increases in appropriations are unlikely in today's tight budget environment, other sources of revenues need to be considered. For example, increasing park entrance fees and concession fees and allowing parks to retain more of these revenues and encouraging private sector partnerships could increase revenues.

However, any increase in revenues must be accompanied by improvements in the Park Service's accountability, especially given the broad discretion that individual park managers have in spending operating funds.

A second choice that would help ease the financial pressures would be to limit additions to, or perhaps decrease the number of units in the National park system. To the extent that the system is permitted to grow, associated infrastructure and development needs will also grow.

As this growth occurs, more parks will be competing for limited Federal funding. In both the last and current Congress', proposals have been offered that would address this alternative.

A third choice would be to reduce the level of visitor services and expectations to more closely match the level of services that can be realistically provided with available resources.

We believe that the Park Service should make the choice to provide the public with a lower-quality experience only after developing a carefully thought out strategy and consulting with the Congress.

Regardless of which of these choices, or combination of choices, are made, the Park Service needs to look for ways to stretch its limited resources by operating more efficiently and looking beyond existing jurisdictional boundaries in their search to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

In summary, Messrs. Chairmen, our work reveals that the future of the parks is at a crossroads. While more people are visiting parks, the level of visitor services is deteriorating. The Park Service, as the steward for many of the Nation's natural and cultural treasures, has a myriad of problems to address ranging from insuf-

ficient data on the conditions of resources to an ever-increasing maintenance backlog.

While the Park Service has recognized its problems and has taken some actions to address them, we believe that because of their magnitude, difficult choices must be made. Unless these choices are made, the Park Service's ability to preserve these treasures for the enjoyment of future generations may be in jeopardy.

That concludes my summary statement. We will be glad to respond to any questions that you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Duffus follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES DUFFUS III, DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES, RESOURCES, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Messrs. Chairmen and members of the subcommittees, we are pleased to be here today to discuss conditions in the national parks. Our comments are based primarily on our work to date for the Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources at 12 geographically dispersed sites within the national park system, including four national parks, two historic parks and one historic site, two national monuments, a civil war battlefield, a recreation area, and a seashore.¹ Our remarks also draw on the 28 reports and testimonies that we have issued over the last 8 years on the Park Service's activities and programs.²

As requested, our work focused on efforts of the National Park Service to meet its mission of serving visitors and managing park resources. Our specific objectives were to (1) determine what, if any, degradation in visitor services or park resources is occurring; (2) identify factors contributing to any degradation of visitor services or park resources; and (3) identify choices available to help deal with identified problems.

In summary, Messrs. Chairmen, we found the following:

The overall level of visitor services is deteriorating. While public satisfaction with the parks is very high, visitor services are being cut back and the condition of many trails, campgrounds, exhibits, and other facilities is declining. Since 1988, the Park Service estimates that the backlog of deferred maintenance has more than doubled to over \$4 billion. In managing resources, most parks do not have the data needed to determine whether the overall condition of the natural and cultural resources is deteriorating, improving, or staying the same.

There are many factors that influence the level of visitor services and resource management activities. Our work identified two factors that were common to most of the parks we visited and had substantial impact on the level of visitor services and resource management activities. These factors were (1) additional operating requirements resulting primarily from over 20 federal laws affecting the parks and (2) increased visitation which drives up routine operating costs for many items that support visitor activities.

Since substantial increases in appropriations are very unlikely in today's tight budget climate, difficult choices need to be made on the future of the national parks. These choices involve: (1) generating more revenue within the parks; (2) limiting the number of parks in the system; and (3) reducing the level of visitor services and expectations. Regardless of which of these choices are made, the Park Service needs to look for ways to operate more efficiently and improve accountability to ensure that the limited dollars are used most effectively.

BACKGROUND

The National Park Service is the caretaker of many of the nation's most precious natural and cultural resources. Today, more than 100 years after the first national park was created, the national park system has grown to include 368 units. These units cover over 80 million acres of land and include an increasingly diverse mix of sites, such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon National Parks; Inde-

¹ App. I lists the 12 sites we visited.

² App. II lists these GAO products.

pendence National Historical Park; national battlefields; national historic sites; national monuments; national preserves; and national recreation areas.

The Park Service's mission has dual objectives. On one hand, the Park Service is to provide for the public's enjoyment of the lands that have been entrusted to its care. This objective involves promoting the use of the parks by providing appropriate visitor services and the infrastructure (such as roads and facilities) that support these services. On the other hand, the Park Service is to protect its lands so that they will be unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Balancing these objectives has long shaped the debate about how best to manage the national park system.

The debate has also been shaped by a number of other developments. Despite the fiscal constraints facing all federal agencies, the number of parks continues to expand—31 parks have been added to the system in the last 10 years. In addition, the backlog of maintenance at national parks has increased substantially. In 1988, we reported that the amount of the backlog of deferred maintenance stood at about \$1.9 billion. Currently, while agency officials acknowledge that they do not have reliable data on this backlog, they estimate that it will cost over \$4 billion.

VISITOR SERVICES DECLINING; CONDITION OF PARK RESOURCES LARGELY UNKNOWN

The natural beauty and historical settings of the parks makes visits by most people a pleasurable and often inspiring experience. Park Service surveys show that, in general, visitors are very pleased with their experience at national parks. Nonetheless, our findings show cause for concern about the health of the parks.

Condition of visitor services

Of the 12 parks included in our review, 11 had recently cut back on the level of visitor services. This reduction is particularly significant considering that managers at most of the parks told us that meeting visitors' needs gets top priority, often at the expense of other park activities. For example:

At Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, last summer, for the first time in 20 years, no lifeguards were on duty along the beach to help ensure the safety of swimmers. The beach is one of the primary attractions of the park.

At Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, interpretive programs to assist visitors in understanding and appreciating the natural and scenic aspects of the park were cut by over 80 percent from 1987 to 1993, and one of the park's most popular campgrounds has been closed. In addition, because of other park priorities, park staff have been unable to remove numerous trees that hang precariously over roads and popular hiking trails, posing a hazard to visitors.

At Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico, the park museum—one of the most popular stops at the park—was closed for more than a year because of problems caused by a leaky roof and an improperly installed security system.

At the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the extended hours of operation to meet visitor demand during the peak summer season have been reduced by 3.5 hours each day—a reduction of more than 25 percent. Furthermore, the duration of the season in which hours are extended was reduced from 3 months to 2 months.

At Lake Mead National Recreation Area in Nevada, during the summer months, park law enforcement personnel are often faced with a backlog of up to 12 calls in responding to health and safety needs of visitors.

As these examples illustrate, the cutbacks in services not only adversely affect visitors' convenience and enjoyment, but also reveal significant gaps in the Park Service's ability to meet visitors' safety needs.

Condition of cultural and natural resources

Knowing the condition of the resources within the national park system is key to the ability of the Park Service to preserve and protect its cultural and natural resources. The Park Service's policy directs that parks be managed on the basis of a knowledge of the resources and their conditions. However, our review indicated that, by and large, the condition and trend of many park resources is largely unknown—particularly for parks featuring natural resources, such as Glacier and Yosemite.

Park Service officials at both headquarters and in the field emphasized to us that effective management of park resources depends heavily upon scientifically collected data that enables park managers to detect damaging changes to the parks' resources and guide the mitigation of those changes. Essentially, this approach involves collecting baseline data about the key park resources and monitoring their condition over time to detect any changes. One park official told us that without such information, damage to key resources could go undetected until it is obvious,

at which point mitigation may be impossible or extremely expensive. However, while park officials emphasized the need for this kind of information, they also acknowledged that information is lacking for many of the parks' resources. A 1992 study done for the Park Service by the National Research Council reported these same concerns.³

Managers at the culturally oriented parks we visited—such as Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island and Hopewell Furnace National Historic site—generally have greater knowledge about their resources than do those at parks that emphasize natural resources. Even at the cultural parks, however, we found instances where (1) the condition of cultural resources was declining or (2) the location and status of cultural resources in many portions of the park remains largely unknown. For example:

Ellis Island was reopened in 1990 as the country's only museum devoted exclusively to immigration. While a portion of the Island's structures have been restored, 32 of 36 historic buildings have seriously deteriorated. According to park officials, about two-thirds of these buildings could be lost within 5 years if they are not properly stabilized. The structures are currently not available for public access. They include the former hospital, quarantine area, and morgue. In addition, although some new storage space is being built, much of Ellis Island's large collection of cultural artifacts is stored in deteriorating facilities. As a result, in one building, much of the collection is covered with dirt and debris from crumbling walls and peeling paint, and leaky roofs have damaged many artifacts.

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site is an 850-acre park in Pennsylvania that depicts a portion of the nation's early industrial development. The main features of the site are a charcoal-fueled blast furnace, an ironmaster's mansion, and auxiliary structures. Although Hopewell Furnace has been a national historical site since 1938, the Park Service has not performed an archeological survey of the site. Also, the Park Service has not developed a general management plan—which would outline an overall approach for protecting and managing the site's resources—even though having such a plan is a key component of effective resource management.

These conditions at cultural sites raise questions about the Park Service's ability to meet its responsibilities to preserve and protect cultural resources. And even less is known about the condition of the Park Service's natural resources. For example:

At both Yosemite and Glacier National Parks, data about many of the parks' natural resources has not been collected, and, as a result, the condition and trend of these resources is largely unknown. At Yosemite, officials told us that, except for reptiles and amphibians, little was known about the condition and trend of species inhabiting the park. Even for reptiles and amphibians, they said the extent of knowledge was poor because it was not based on scientific study but simply represented their "best guess as to the condition and trend of these resources. At Glacier, baseline information on park wildlife was similarly inadequate.

At Padre Island National Seashore, park managers told us that they did not have sufficient information on the condition of four of the seven categories of wildlife within the park. Park officials lacked detailed data on the condition of marine fish, terrestrial invertebrates, reptiles/amphibians, and terrestrial mammals. Furthermore, except for certain species, such as endangered sea turtles that use portions of the park as nesting areas, officials had little knowledge about whether the condition of wildlife within the park was stable, improving, or worsening.

The Park Service began efforts several years ago to gather better information about the condition of the parks' resources. However, progress has been limited, and the completion of much of the work is many years away. In the meantime, park managers often make decisions about the parks' operations without knowing the impact of these decisions on the resources. For example, at Yosemite National Park, after 70 years of stocking non-native fish in various lakes and waterways, park officials realized that indiscriminate stocking had done more harm than good. As a result, according to park officials, the park's waterways have been compromised. Non-native fish introduced into the park now outnumber native rainbow trout by a 4 to

³*Science and the National Parks*, National Research Council, 1992.

1 margin. According to park officials, this stocking policy, which continued until 1990, has also resulted in a decline of at least one federally protected species.⁴

MAJOR FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CURRENT SITUATION

Since 1985, the Park Service's operating budget has risen from about \$627 million to about \$972 million—or by about 55 percent. After allowing for inflation, the increase still amounts to about 18 percent. At 11 of the 12 parks we visited, funding increases outpaced inflation from 1985 to 1993.⁵ Increases ranged from 5 percent to about 200 percent. However, despite these increases, additional demands on the parks are eroding the Park Service's ability to keep up with the needs for visitor services and resource management.

Many factors influence the level of visitor services and resource management activities. While these factors are not necessarily the same at all parks, our work identified two factors that were common to most of the parks we visited and had a substantial impact on the level of visitor services and resource management activities. These factors were (1) additional operating requirements and (2) increased visitation.

Additional operating requirements

Many additional operating requirements are passed on to the parks through federal laws. In many cases, funds are not made available to the parks to cover the entire costs of these requirements. Park managers cited numerous requirements from such laws as the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act and from the implementing regulations of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Overall, at the 12 parks we visited, park managers cited over 20 different federal laws affecting the parks' operations.⁶

Park managers told us that meeting these requirements meant diverting money from day-to-day park activities. In 1994, for example, Yosemite National Park spent about \$100,000 to address the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's regulations and \$80,000 to identify and remove hazardous waste. At Glacier National Park, federal requirements for lead paint abatement, asbestos removal, surface water treatment, waste water treatment systems, and accessibility for disabled visitors required park managers to divert operating funds from other park activities. While Glacier's records do not track the total costs associated with meeting these requirements, park officials told us these costs were substantial and significantly eroded the amount of operating funds available for day-to-day park activities. Each park we visited had similar examples. These costs are significant since only about 25 percent of a park's operating budget remains to meet day-to-day park needs after paying salaries and benefits.

Furthermore, because salaries and benefits are such a large portion of the parks' budgets, even small increases in these costs can diminish a park's ability to meet its needs for visitor services and resource management. These costs include expenditures for new law enforcement certification and training requirements for park rangers, increased compensation for rangers, full background checks on law enforcement personnel, cost-of-living increases, and retirement costs. For example, last year at Yosemite National Park the cost of doing routine background checks for park rangers was about \$200,000. At Lake Mead, less than half of the cost of the increased compensation for park rangers was met through budget increases, leaving an additional \$200,000 to be paid from the park's operating funds.

Increased visitation

The second factor eroding the parks' operating budgets is the increase in visitation. Eight of the 12 parks showed increases in the number of visitors; the average increase was 27 percent since 1985. The four parks where decreases occurred were small historical parks where visitation averaged less than 200,000 in 1993. These substantial increases in visitation drive up costs for many items that directly support visitor activities, such as waste disposal, general maintenance, road and trail repair, employees' overtime, and utilities. For example, at Lake Head National Recreation Area, the costs of trash disposal have more than tripled from \$47,000 in 1990 to \$152,000 last year. As a result, a portion of the increased funding that the parks have received has been spent to cover the costs associated with meeting the needs generated by increased visitation.

⁴The federally protected species was the mountain yellow-legged frog.

⁵Because the Statue of Liberty was closed for much of 1985 and 1986, we used the period from 1987 to 1993 for our analysis of that park's budget and visitation trends.

⁶App. III lists these laws.

CHOICES WILL BE DIFFICULT

Messrs. Chairmen, many of the problems we have told you about today are not new. At the same time that visitor services are being cut back and parks are operating without sufficient information on many of their resources, the Park Service faces a multibillion dollar maintenance backlog and, like all federal agencies, increasingly tight budgets. In addition, infrastructure and development needs on the system continue to grow as new units are added—31 since 1984.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult to envision a turnaround in the short term. Dealing with this situation calls for making difficult choices about how parks are funded and managed, some of which may require legislative changes. Our work indicates that these choices, or a combination of them, need to address three areas: (1) the amount of revenue going to the parks, (2) the number of units in the park system, and (3) the extent to which current park operating standards and visitor expectations can or should be revised. In addition, the Park Service needs to look for ways to operate more efficiently and improve accountability to assure that the limited dollars are used most effectively.

While substantial increases in appropriations are not likely in today's tight budget environment, other sources of revenues need to be considered. These could include (1) increasing park fees, such as entrance fees, concession fees, and fees for other in-park services, and allowing parks to retain more of these revenues to address their needs, and (2) encouraging park managers to be more entrepreneurial in addressing their park's needs by entering into partnership arrangements with the private sector or other parties. However, any increase in revenues must be accompanied by improvements in the Park Service's accountability. The need for improved accountability is critical in light of the broad discretion given to individual park managers in determining how to spend operating funds. Park Service officials indicated to us that they plan to improve accountability.

A second choice would be to limit additions to, or perhaps decrease the number of units in the national park system. To the extent that the system is permitted to grow, associated infrastructure and development needs will also grow. As this growth occurs, more park units will be competing for limited federal funding. While certainly not an easy decision, limiting the number of parks, or perhaps even reducing the number until the parks' current conditions can be adequately addressed will help ease the financial pressures now facing the park system. In both the last and current Congress, proposals have been offered that would address this alternative.

A third choice would be to reduce the level of visitor services, as well as visitors' expectations, to more closely match the level of services that can realistically be provided with available resources. The Park Service could, for example, limit operations to fewer hours per day or fewer days per year, limit the number of visitors, or perhaps temporarily close some facilities to public use. We believe that the Park Service should make the choice to provide the public with a lower-quality experience only after developing a carefully thought-out strategy and consulting with the Congress.

Regardless of which of these choices or combination of choices are made, the Park Service needs to look for ways to stretch its limited resources by operating more efficiently. Toward this end, the Park Service has developed a restructuring plan to meet the goals of the first phase of the administration's National Performance Review. However, this restructuring plan is limited primarily to changes that can be accomplished within the Park Service's existing structure. The plan does not address the potential to improve operations through a collaborative approach to land management involving other federal land management agencies. The current fiscal climate demands that federal land management agencies look beyond existing jurisdictional boundaries in their search to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and improve service to the public. Park Service officials told us they are currently working with other land management agencies to improve operations and will continue to do so.

In summary, Messrs. Chairmen, our work reveals that the future of the parks is at a crossroads. While more people are visiting parks, the services available to these visitors are deteriorating. The Park Service, as the steward for many of the nation's natural and cultural treasures, has a myriad of problems to address ranging from insufficient data on the conditions of resources to an ever-increasing maintenance backlog. While the Park Service has recognized its problems and has taken some actions to address them, we believe that because of their magnitude, difficult choices must be made. Unless these choices are made, the Park Service's ability to preserve these treasures for the enjoyment of future generations may be in jeopardy.

Messrs. Chairmen, this concludes our statement. We would be glad to respond to any questions that you or other members of the Subcommittees may have.

[Appendix I]

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SITES VISITED

Park unit	Location
Antietam National Battlefield	Maryland
Bandelier National Monument	New Mexico
Denali National Park and Preserve	Alaska
Glacier National Park	Montana
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park	Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site	Pennsylvania
Lake Mead National Recreation Area	Nevada and Arizona
Padre Island National Seashore	Texas
Pecos National Historic Park	New Mexico
Shenandoah National Park	Virginia
Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island	New York and New Jersey
Yosemite National Park	California

[Appendix II]

PERTINENT GAO REPORTS AND TESTIMONIES BY SUBJECT AREA

PARK SERVICE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

National Park Service: Better Management and Broader Restructuring Efforts Are Needed (GAO/T-RCED-95-101, Feb. 9, 1995).

National Park Service: Reexamination of Employee Housing Program Is Needed (GAO/RCED-94-284, Aug. 30, 1994).

National Park Service: Activities Outside Park Borders Have Caused Damage to Resources and Will Likely Cause More (GAO/RCED-94-59, Jan. 3, 1994).

Department of the Interior: Transfer of the Presidio From the Army to the National Park Service (GAO/T-RCED-94-64, Oct. 26, 1993).

Department of the Interior: Transfer of the Presidio From the Army to the National Park Service (GAO/RCED-94-61, Oct. 26, 1993).

National Park Service: Condition of and Need for Employee Housing (GAO/RCED-93-192, Sept. 30, 1993).

National Park Service: Scope and Cost of America's Industrial Heritage Project Need to Be Defined (GAO/RCED-93-134, May 14, 1993).

National Park Service: Status of Development at the Steamtown National Historic Site (GAO/T-RCED-92-6, Oct. 11, 1991).

Air Pollution: Protecting Parks and Wilderness From Nearby Pollution Sources (GAO/RCED-90-10, Feb. 7, 1990).

The Maintenance Needs of the National Park Service (GAO/T-RCED-88-27, Mar. 23, 1988).

Parks and Recreation: Park Service Managers Report Shortfalls in Maintenance Funding (GAO/RCED-88-91BR, Mar. 21, 1988).

Parks and Recreation: Limited Progress Made in Documenting and Mitigating Threats to the Parks (GAO/RCED-87-36, Feb. 9, 1987).

CONCESSIONS ISSUES

Federal Lands: Improvements Needed in Managing Short-Term Concessioners (GAO/RCED-93-177, Sept. 14, 1993).

Federal Land: Little Progress Made in Improving Oversight of Concessioners (GAO/T-RCED-93-42, May 27, 1993).

National Parks: Issues Involved in the Sale of the Yosemite National Park Concessioner (GAO/RCED-92-232, Sept. 10, 1992).

National Park Service: Policies and Practices for Determining Concessioners' Building Use Fees (GAO/T-RCED-92-66, May 21, 1992).

Federal Lands: Oversight of Long-Term Concessioners (GAO/RCED-92-128BR, Mar. 20, 1992).

Federal Lands: Improvements Needed in Managing Concessioners (GAO/RCED-91-163, June 11, 1991).

Recreation Concessioners Operating on Federal Lands (GAO/T-RCED-91-16, Mar. 21, 1991).

OTHER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Management Reform: Implementation of the National Performance Review's Recommendations (GAO/OCG-95-1, Dec. 5, 1994).

Ecosystem Management: Additional Actions Needed to Adequately Test a Promising Approach (GAO/T-RCED-94-308 Sept. 20, 1994).

Ecosystem Management: Additional Actions Needed to Adequately Test a Promising Approach (GAO/RCED-94-111, Aug. 16, 1994).

Addressing the Deficit: Budgetary Implications of Selected GAO Work (GAO/OCG-94-3, Mar. 11, 1994).

Forest Service Management: Issues to Be Considered in Developing a New Stewardship Strategy (GAO/T-RCED-94-116, Feb. 1, 1994).

Management Reform: GAO's Comments on the National Performance Review's Recommendations (GAO/OCG-94-1, Dec. 5, 1993).

Natural Resources Management: Issues to Be Considered by the Congress and the Administration (GAO/T-93-5, Feb. 2, 1993).

Natural Resources Management Issues (GAO/OCG-93-17TR, Dec. 1992).

Interior Issues (GAO/OCG-89-24TR, Nov. 1988).

[Appendix III]

SELECTED FEDERAL LAWS AFFECTING THE NATIONAL PARKS

GENERAL PARK ADMINISTRATION

Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended.

National Park Service General Authorities Act of 1970 (PL 91-383).

Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, as amended.

CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT/PROTECTION

American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

Antiquities Act of 1906.

Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (PL 93-291).

Archeological Resources Protection Act 1979, as amended.

Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act of 1935.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

National Historic Preservation Act.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT/PROTECTION

Clean Air Act.

Clean Water Act.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, as amended.

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Mining in the Parks Act of 1976 (PL 94-429).

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

VISITOR SERVICES/SAFETY

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976.

Safe Drinking Water Act.

Solid Waste Disposal Act.

Toxic Substances Control Act.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you very much. What we will do, Mr. Chairman, if it is all right with you, is we will just alternate back and forth in asking questions.

In the meantime, let me call on Senator Bumpers, if you have any statement you would like to make, sir.

STATEMENT OF HON. DALE BUMPERS, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARKANSAS

Senator BUMPERS. Mr. Chairman, I have an opening statement. With your permission and the other members, I will ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to insert it into the record.

Senator THOMAS. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Senator Bumpers follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DALE BUMPERS, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARKANSAS

Good morning, Mr. Chairmen. Since, this is the first hearing of the Senate Parks Subcommittee in this Congress, I would like to welcome Senator Thomas both to the Committee and as Chairman of this subcommittee. I have served as either the Chairman or Ranking member of this Subcommittee since 1979, and despite the sometimes considerable philosophical differences with my Republican counterparts on National Park and other public land issues, I think we have always had a good working relationship, and I look forward to that continuing with you. Over the next few years, we will be dealing with a number of very important issues facing the National Park Service, and I hope that we will, in most cases, be able to work together to try and resolve them.

This hearing is also notable in that it represents a rare joint hearing between the House and Senate authorizing Subcommittees, and I would like to welcome Congressman Jim Hansen, the new Chairman of the Subcommittee, as well as Bill Richardson, my counterpart Ranking Member.

Mr. Chairmen, I think an oversight hearing on the general health of the National Park System is a good place to begin this Congress. I have read the GAO's prepared testimony, and I don't think it contains too many surprises. We all will agree, I am sure, that the combination of leaner Federal budgets and the demands imposed by increasing visitation at parks, is placing a severe strain on the resources of the National Park System. I don't think that there is any doubt that, at least in some cases, park resources are deteriorating, visitor services are having to be curtailed, and the waiting list to complete construction and land acquisition projects is growing longer.

I would also agree with the GAO's observation that one of the solutions is to increase the revenues going to parks. I think that President Clinton and Secretary Babbitt have done an admirable job of maintaining a strong Park Service budget in these difficult fiscal times, but clearly Federal appropriated dollars will not be sufficient, in and of themselves, to resolve the Park Service's funding needs.

That is why I think we must look at other ways to make sure that the revenue collected by parks stays in the parks, instead of being returned to the Treasury. As you all are aware, until two years ago, none of the fees collected by the Park Service were kept in the parks, being returned instead to the general fund. We are, however, starting to make inroads towards keeping more of the money at the parks level. During the previous Congress, we enacted language which allowed the Park Service to retain 15 percent of the total fees collected, and to spend that amount, without further appropriation, to pay for the increased cost of collecting fees. From what I understand, that ability to retain the costs of collection has provided greater incentive and ability to collect more fees and increase revenues.

In this regard, I anticipate that we will again consider proposals to increase park entrance fees. As I have said before, I am not very enthusiastic about increasing visitor fees, but I will support an increase so long as the increased revenues are returned to the parks. The Energy Committee reported a bill last year that accomplished that goal, and any bill we consider this year should do likewise.

Secondly, we must achieve a greater return from commercial users in our parks. Last year, Senator Bennett and I sponsored a bill which would make concession operations within units of the National Park System open to competition, which I believe will lead (as does the Park Service) to better services for the public and a greater return to the Federal government. This year, Senator Bennett and I have again introduced a concession reform bill, S. 309, that is almost identical to the bill that passed the Senate last Congress by a vote of 90 to 9. Senator Thomas, we have written asking for a hearing on this bill at your earliest convenience, and I hope that we will be able to move this bill very quickly.

Finally, I would like to make a brief observation on the GAO's other alternative, a limitation on the number of parks in the system. I know several members are anxious to establish something similar to a base closure commission, where an independent entity would make recommendations to close or transfer certain park units,

and Congress would either adopt or reject the package as a whole. While I don't think it is necessarily a bad idea to look at all park areas, I think the only way an area should be deauthorized is if Congress, on a case-by-case basis, passes a law to do so. Last year, this Committee reported legislation sponsored by Senator Wallop that would have established a commission to make recommendations to the Secretary and the Congress, but not to actually deauthorize any areas. I think a proposal such as that would be useful and workable, but I would strongly oppose any attempts to follow the base closure model. I do think it would be helpful, though, to establish some type of formal guidelines with respect to proposed new units. I can tell the new chairmen that in the closing days of the Congress, you will come under tremendous pressure from our colleagues to agree to park proposals that have not been adequately heard and considered. A clear and objective set of criteria to apply in such situations will make your jobs easier.

Thank you, Mr. Chairmen.

Senator THOMAS. We will try and limit our questions to 5 minutes or less and we will go around again if we need to do that.

You mentioned a number of times accountability. Would you tell me what you mean and what kind of accountability and what the need is that you speak of.

Mr. DUFFUS. First of all, when we talk about accountability, we believe what it means in a broad sense is holding folks accountable for their actions. We found, though, that you cannot have accountability without sufficient data and right now, as we indicated today, and as I testified on February 9, that there is not sufficient data, both programmatic data and financial data with respect to the conditions and trends of the resources.

When we talk about accountability, we are saying that we want to make sure that the funds that are available are being spent effectively and are accomplishing results. In order to do that, you have to hold someone accountable for the expenditure for those funds.

Senator THOMAS. Would lack of accountability result in not being able to actually define where the money was spent or what the money was spent for or to have a budget and be able to show how the expenditures related to that budget?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, right now, you have a lot of autonomy at the park level with respect to how the operating funds are spent. As I indicated, about 75 percent are in the fixed category of costs and benefits, leaving about 25 percent for discretionary spending.

Park managers have a lot of flexibility on how they spend those funds. We think they need to be accountable on how they spend those funds and there has to be some measurable result that comes from the expenditure of those funds. It is essential.

Senator THOMAS. You mentioned in your statement that the condition and trend of many park resources is largely unknown. That strikes me as being pretty unusual. You are saying, I guess, that the actual managers of the park are not familiar with the condition or the trend of their resources?

Mr. DUFFUS. Maybe I can ask Mr. Fowler to help me in this response. We found a lack of baseline data on the condition of resources and data to depict the trends of those resources, whether or not the resources are improving, staying the same, or deteriorating.

Mr. FOWLER. What I would add is at the 12 parks we visited, when you asked the park managers about the condition of resources, they could certainly give you answers to that. The an-

swers, by and large, are based on their professional judgment, the professional judgment of staff devoted to resource management there. So, they can do that.

The point we are trying to bring out clearly, I hope, is that the proper way to do it, according to resource managers, is to develop an inventory of the resources you have, to develop scientific data that permits you to monitor the condition of that resource over time.

So, you can predict change, or see change, in the status of the resource. It is the lack of the scientific data that is missing. They could certainly give you answers based on professional judgment.

There are some resources in some parks that they know quite a bit about but overall, the information is lacking.

Senator THOMAS. You mentioned and have a section on visitor services and I think your conclusion is they generally have deteriorated and are less than they were at some time.

Are you talking—well, what is your analysis of the services provided by concessionaires?

Mr. FOWLER. In this particular job we did not look at the quality of the services provided by concessionaires.

Senator THOMAS. So, these visitor services that you talked about are provided by the park itself?

Mr. FOWLER. Correct.

Mr. DUFFUS. The types of services we are talking about would be the campgrounds, trails, protective services, facilities, things along those lines, that are provided by the park.

Senator THOMAS. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

Mr. HANSEN. Before we start on my side, Mr. Radanovich of California, do you have an opening statement you would like to make?

**STATEMENT OF HON. GEORGE P. RADANOVICH,
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA**

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Chairman, if I could just state that I am a new congressman from California. I have three national parks in my district, Yosemite, Kings and Sequoia National Parks and I am very interested on what goes on within concessions in those parks and particularly in the Yosemite National Park, and how that park deals with outlying communities and using satellite communities such as my home town of Mariposa, communities like Sonora and Oakhurst, as a means of solving some of the problems that are incurred within the part, for example, transportation, and some of the management issues, too.

The only other thing I would like to mention is that I have a bit of a concern in the fact that being affiliated with Yosemite National Park and knowing what its problems, their infrastructure problems, the impact of high rates of tourism in that park, at the same time, bringing in thousands and thousands of acres in the desert part of southern California and to me, it was just a very mixed message.

You want to take care of what you have got first before you start adding parks. I think it makes a lot of sense. That is kind of where I am coming from on these issues.

Mr. HANSEN. Thank you.

Mr. Duffus, we appreciated your testimony and the testimony you gave before our committee, with the Appropriations Committee a few weeks ago.

I guess I keep puzzling on this idea as we look in the 1980s and actually the parks received a rather substantial amount of money and yet, we have the maintenance deferred, we have backlogs, we have infrastructure falling apart.

There is a real paradox, in my mind, on one side we are having all these problems. We talk about the money that was put into parks. You kind of ask yourself the question, we put money in parks and nothing happened.

We are trying on our side to come up with creative ways to take care of these problems, like, maybe, an increase in entrance fees, concessionaires, taxes. You do not want to use the "T" word any more, but still, all those things are standing there and I am sitting here wondering why this paradox?

Why, on one side we put this money in and at the other side we don't see any results coming out of the other end? And also, you see a difference in parks.

You alluded to it in your report here. One person apparently in one area, he has got a problem, so he closes down campgrounds in Shenandoah Park, and then in somewhere else, they turn over the management of the campgrounds to the concessionaire, for example.

Have you got an answer to that question at all?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, that is a good question. There is variation in what is done to deal with the problems. That is because of the autonomy that park managers have. They make the decisions whether or not they should close a camp ground or they should take the lifeguard off duty.

So, that is their decision to make. There is no question that over the past 10 years, as we have indicated, there has been an increase in real terms in the Park Service's budget. At the 12 parks we went to, we were told consistently that there were two things that eroded parks' operating budgets and these were additional operating requirements and increases in visitation.

Also, with respect to visitation, when park managers had to set priorities. The first priority, they told us, was visitor services. If they had to choose between meeting a visitor service and something else, the choice would be meeting the visitor service.

But, any increase in funding calls for increased accountability. It is tough to say what the money went for if you don't have accountability over the expenditure of the funds. In addition, they do not have measurable performance standards to hold managers accountable for what was accomplished with the funds so that the funds are spent effectively in accomplishing something specific.

Mr. HANSEN. If you had a measurable performance standard much like some business would have, where it has a lot of branch offices scattered all over the United States, how would you structure that? How would you make a simple, yet effective, measurable standard?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, I could provide an example. A measurable standard could be that in a park with a substantial backlog of deferred maintenance, you would require, perhaps over a year period,

that the backlog be reduced and park managers would have to show some significant reductions in the backlog.

At the end of that year, then, you would hold them to that performance. You would see a measurable result that came out of it.

Mr. HANSEN. You do not see that now; is that right?

Mr. DUFFUS. No, sir, we do not.

Mr. HANSEN. You also alluded to operating requirements. Are you alluding to the idea that possibly the Federal Government has rolled on heavier requirements to the park system, I mean, a few off the top of your head, the Clean Air Act, things such as that, rather substantial requirements. Does this also jack up the cost of running these parks?

Mr. DUFFUS. Yes, it has. Maybe Mr. Fowler can respond with somewhat more detail, but it has been a factor.

Mr. FOWLER. It has, but I would add to what Jim said is the whole issue of accountability. The bedrock of that is for the agency, for any agency, in this case the Park Service, is to have good, accurate, reliable data on what is going on in the park, assurances that the money is spent the way it was intended to be spent, that kind of good, solid, reliable data.

It is that part of it that bothers us in our work, in our work over the years, not only for this particular study, but other work has shown that the Park Service does not have reliable data—resource management is just one example.

They do not have the scientific data on what the condition of the resource, by and large, of what the resources are out there. Without that kind of basic information, you could talk about accountability, but you can't get there without it.

That gets you into the issue of how do you measure what you are getting for the money? How do you measure results? How do you measure performance? You measure that only when you have reliable, solid data.

Mr. HANSEN. Thank you. I see my time is up, but after 15 years on this committee I have come to the conclusion, I used to think all we need is money to go at it. I think I am coming down harder on the side of the idea that we need more accountability.

Having visited most of the Western parks, I almost think that that is where we need to go. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. Let me call on the ranking member, Senator Bumpers.

Senator BUMPERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Is it Duffus?

Mr. DUFFUS. Yes, sir.

Senator BUMPERS. Mr. Duffus, you pointed out in your testimony that there was an 18 percent increase in park funding since 1985. Did the average park get that or was that simply diffused over all the new parks we have added since 1985?

Mr. DUFFUS. I believe that went to the parks.

Senator BUMPERS. What I am talking about, did the average park get that kind of an increase in real dollars? They could not have received all of it because we have added an awful lot of parks since 1985.

Mr. Staley, do you know the answer?

Mr. STALEY. I can help you a little bit, Senator. We did not look at all the parks. The 12 parks we looked at in this particular study, 11 of the 12 got an increase in real terms. The increase varied, however, from park to park.

Of the 11 that got increases, the real increase was as low as 5 percent, as high as 200 percent. There was one park that did not realize an increase in real terms.

Senator BUMPERS. Which park received a 200 percent increase?

Mr. STALEY. That was Pecos, down in New Mexico.

Senator BUMPERS. Pecos?

Mr. STALEY. Right, right, and the main reason for that is—

Senator BUMPERS. Well, was that simply an increase from \$1,000 to \$3,000, or what was it?

Mr. STALEY. No, it was a 200 percent increase.

Senator BUMPERS. Well, I know, but what were the dollars?

Mr. STALEY. The dollars approximated, in 1993, they received \$1 million in their operating budget, so it was a substantial increase. The main reason for that was in 1990, the park was about 360 acres and an additional 6,000 acres were added to the park as a result of a donation and this resulted in the increase in the operating budget, to begin the planning, to assess the resources, get the paperwork going, to put together a resource management plan.

To date, however, they are still dealing with a draft resource management plan, so they have a ways to go. But that park, Pecos, received the largest increase over that period of time.

Senator BUMPERS. How does the Park Service allocate increases? We are increasing funding for the Park Service almost by \$100 million from about a \$1.1 billion to \$1.17 billion, or some such thing as that, close to a \$100 million increase.

Does the Park Service just give each park the same amount of increase or is it on an ad hoc basis? Is it done on a political basis, whoever over here has the most clout and calls the park director, or what?

Does the budget contain specific increases for each park or is it just a lump sum item to the Park Service?

Ms. RUSTEN. There is an across-the-board base increase for each park that is the same for each park and then other parks may get additional money for special projects or special needs.

Senator BUMPERS. Have you been able to determine whether that is done on some sort of business-like basis or is that just sort of an ad hoc decision made by somebody over at the Park Service?

Mr. FOWLER. I don't believe we can answer that. We did not look at the priority scheme that applies to that.

Senator BUMPERS. Can you tell me how much the increase in park entrance fees is amounting to as a percentage of what the fees were before they were increased? Have you looked at that yet?

Mr. DUFFUS. I don't believe we have looked at that. We know that in 1993, servicewide, there was \$85 million collected in fees.

Senator BUMPERS. Say that again, Mr. Duffus.

Mr. DUFFUS. We cannot tell you what the increase, the percentage increase was, but for 1993, the Park Service, servicewide, collected \$85 million in fees, entrance fees, user fees, concession fees and special permit fees.

Senator BUMPERS. Are you familiar with the Civil War Battlefield Commission's recommendations? We had the Civil War Battlefield Commission set up a few years ago and they came back with recommendations on the battlefields on a priority basis, one, two, three. Did you have occasion to look at that?

Mr. FOWLER. We did not.

Mr. DUFFUS. No.

Senator BUMPERS. Did you have occasion to look at the concessions bill that Senator Bennett and I introduced?

Mr. FOWLER. S. 208, from last year?

Senator BUMPERS. Yes, we reported it out of this committee last year. As you know, somebody put a hold on it for the last few days, so we reintroduced essentially the same bill this year.

Mr. FOWLER. We did not study it. We were aware of it and its contents.

Senator BUMPERS. You have not looked at that?

Mr. FOWLER. We were aware of it.

Senator BUMPERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HANSEN. Mrs. Smith.

Mr. Smith. No questions, thank you.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Vento.

Mr. VENTO. Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Duffus, I note that as an example, I don't know, management by objective for individual parks, I really wonder. But I did pay attention to the data base needs of the various parks. Part of the problem there is that the Park Service does not have the resource to do that; is that correct?

They do not have the resources. It is not as though they have the dollars that they are charged to get the data base and they are not doing it; is that correct?

Mr. DUFFUS. Resources are a problem, yes, sir.

Mr. VENTO. And, of course, we have—obviously, science is today is much more involved in the sense that we are talking, in a sense, about ecosystem management and talking about the interrelated nature of the science.

For instance, I know one of the Alaskan parks were added. One of the requests of the Park Service to the Department of the Interior under Cecil Andrus was to, in fact, obtain a data base, basic information, so that if we have incidents occur, as did occur, for instance, with the *Exxon Valdez*, that we would have the background information so we could make an assessment of what the situation was and what had occurred or what the impact was in terms of that oil and the water column.

That didn't occur, did it? Did you review whether the Park Service had requested money for, in fact, doing their general management plan, doing their data base, these 12 parks. I know, you just dealt with 12 parks.

Mr. FOWLER. They requested money for that, yes.

Mr. VENTO. They requested money and what happened? I mean, you pointed out that one park, I forget which, hadn't done their general management plan. Had they requested dollars for that?

Mr. FOWLER. Yes.

Mr. VENTO. You see, what I am trying to do, I think my colleagues have to pay attention here, because the point is, it is easy

get up here and say the Park Service did not do a general management plan for its entire existence.

But then, the question is, if they requested dollars to do that and didn't get it, then it is either one of two things, either the Congress did not appropriate it or the Administration did not properly allocate the appropriation.

So, do you know the answer to my question, Mr. Fowler?

Mr. FOWLER. In this way, they did ask for it but once it goes back to the Park Service it is hard to say it is part of the operating funds that go to the park, so ultimately it is a matter of priorities, and what that money is spent on.

Mr. VENTO. If we want accountability, though, if we are saying we need a new accountability system, we had better know whether they are getting the dollars and not doing what they are asked to do. There is two different things here and I think we have to pay attention.

You know, I noticed in this, and this is a chance where I have had a chance to visit Lake Mead, the Lake Mead area, and obviously, it is an explosive public use there. When I visited, the Park Service personnel pointed out to me they have just hordes of young people, hundreds of young people, that go out into park and it is uncontrollable and a dangerous situation in terms of what goes on and around the beaches in that area at night after things close down early in the morning, maybe even employees, drive out to this Lake Mead area.

The Park Service, you point out, has a backlog of 12 calls that they are not answering, I forget what, the point was, that they are not answering the calls out there. But the point is, do you know what the jurisdiction was? Is their jurisdiction exclusive jurisdiction, joint jurisdiction, or is it given over? It must be joint because they are saying they are involved.

Did you explore whether the Park Service ought to change the contract or change the jurisdiction they have around Lake Mead? Is that an alternative in dealing with the backlog problem, Mr. Woodward?

Mr. WOODWARD. That could be an option. I think we point out the need for better coordination between the Park Service and other Federal land management agencies, in this case, it is the park police, it is park rangers.

Mr. VENTO. One of the problems, I would just point out, is that sometimes the State of Nevada or the county may not want to take on that jurisdiction because it costs money to, in fact, do that. And of course, the use of that is changing greatly. Lake Mead is almost an urban park, a tremendous number of problems.

With regard to data base, I would also point out that the Partnership Cooperative Act, the Park Service has actually engaged the universities to help develop that data base, and I think it should be pursued.

Did you make any evaluation of the Park Service partnership efforts? One of them relates to Ellis Island. Of course, we all know they have raised hundreds of millions of dollars to fix up the Statue of Liberty and so I am sure it comes as a surprise to my colleagues to say, "Hey, 32 or the 36 buildings on Ellis Island are not repaired."

But what happened? Did you check the history of that? Wasn't there an agreement between the Partnership for Housing and that did not materialize, which would have, in fact, repaired most of those buildings and put them into some sort complimentary use, Mr. Fowler?

Mr. FOWLER. We did not check out that particular agreement.

Mr. VENTO. Well, there was, and there were considerable efforts, so I think you need to understand the context. Content without context ends up being pretext. So, you need to understand—Reverend Burns, I see your time is next—as to what is going on.

With regards to the yellow-legged frog in Yosemite, I think it was Yosemite you talked about here, that they had destroyed the native fish population, which I think is really very serious, but did they work with the Fish and Wildlife Service in terms of making judgments about whether they should introduce nonnative trout, I guess they are brook trout, you don't say in here, but they are either brooks or some other, not the native rainbow trout that occurs there. Who did the work on that?

Mr. STALEY. I was there.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Staley.

Mr. STALEY. Right. A little history on that—

Mr. VENTO. Did they check out with the Fish and Wildlife Service what they were doing? You made this assertion that they did this. Do you know what the background was of it? Were they just doing this on their own? Did they have their own scientists that deal with it?

Mr. STALEY. The State of California, as well as the Park Service were the two principal agencies that introduced the nonnative fish. Now, there was not any study done over those many, many years to determine the impact.

Mr. VENTO. How long ago was it? How long ago was it?

Mr. STALEY. About 70 years ago, it started, so in the 1920s.

Mr. VENTO. Well, I just think that the genesis of it isn't something recent. I think we can all look at problems that have occurred with nonnative species. In fact, we have got some who wanted to bring Eurasian hogs into Minnesota.

There are a lot of these interesting ideas floating around. I would say they are a little off the wall, but I think here is a case where they were trying to cooperate but I think the thing is, how do we correct it?

One of the problems with the Park Service, as an example, my colleagues, is that they don't have a lot of scientists. They rely upon the Fish and Wildlife Service and others. They have fewer scientists than BLM, the Forest Service and/or Fish and Wildlife Service. So, have you found that—the National Biological Survey is an answer to part of this.

My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator THOMAS. We will let you finish that quote.

Mr. VENTO. The National Biological Survey, Mr. Chairman.

Senator THOMAS. We have been joined by the Senator from Idaho. Do you have a statement, Senator Craig?

**STATEMENT OF HON. LARRY E. CRAIG, U.S. SENATOR FROM
IDAHO**

Senator CRAIG. I will be very brief because I was not here for your testimony.

Senator BUMPERS. We put ours in the record.

Senator BURNS. Yes, we put ours in the record, Senator.

Senator CRAIG. Mr. Chairman, let the record show that I have had the privilege of knowing Dale Bumpers for nigh onto 3 years, and he puts a lot in the record.

Senator BUMPERS. You just think I do because people listen.

Senator THOMAS. Have I lost control of the hearing?

[Laughter.]

Senator CRAIG. No, Mr. Chairman, you have not. You have the gavel.

A couple of comments. Certainly all of us are concerned about the status of our parks. My hope is that during our tenure here in the Senate in the majority, that we will be able to adhere to something that the Chairman's predecessor argued loudly and that we are acquiring much more land than we are willing to afford to manage and we are spreading the Park Service tremendously thin.

As a result, we are creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, in many instances, where the parks simply cannot handle the volumes of people. And yet, we keep adding for the political sake of an awful lot of members here and then not doing it, not coming up with the funds necessary to manage those units.

I don't argue the integrity of the inclusions or their values. I just simply say we have been in the business of adding a lot longer than we have in financing.

I know that the Senator from Minnesota is concerned about law enforcement. He has expressed that before and I, too, share that concern as to the effective management.

We are in a bit of a tug of war over whether agencies ought to create their own law enforcement entities and we have funded some, not just with parks but also with BLM and Forest Service and other areas, or we ought to develop increasing cooperative relationships between local units of government who tend to have the expertise in law enforcement.

I err on the side of cooperative relationships with local units and State units. I don't like to see the forest supervisor or the local park ranger walking around with a six-shooter on his or her side. I think it begs a question that sometimes can be disastrous.

Let me also say that as it relates to the introduction of nonnative species, we have a nonnative species in Idaho that is now world-acclaimed. It is known as the elk. It was nonnative to Idaho and it was introduced in the early 1900s. It is now that which every hunter and every recreationalist and every environmentalist seeks a peek at.

So, sometimes, if properly managed, the introduction of nonnatives where natives have become extinct or tragically endangered is an acceptable proposition if done properly. I would much rather see that than the shutting down of a region to try to acquire its politically correct status under the Endangered Species Act which sometimes becomes dramatically antihuman.

So, I know that the Park Service walks a fine line. I do agree that if they don't have the expertise, they have to rely on joint relationships with other management agencies and I think they can do that in many instances and cut the costs if we clarify the guidelines.

But, at the same time, I am one of those who is going to work very hard to assure that we have an effectively funded Park Service but I am also one who is going to probably vote consistently no for additions until we get that which we have properly handled.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator THOMAS. I think next we should go to questions from the Senator from Montana.

Senator BURNS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to be very brief on this and I wanted to thank you for your work and everything. I am slowly coming to a conclusion here that the Park Service is in bad need of an accounting system. Is that a wrong assumption?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, that is not based on any work we did, but if you listen to what Interior's Inspector General said at the February 9 hearing, that was exactly her conclusion, that the fiscal side of the Park Service was in need of repair and in need of fixing up.

I think the Park Service has subsequently reached agreement with the Inspector General that they will do something about it.

Senator BURNS. I don't know how much trouble I would get into if I recommended—do you think, in your opinion, it is time for an outside audit?

Mr. DUFFUS. For the Park Service?

Senator BURNS. Yes.

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, that is a tough one because we haven't done the work. I note that the Secretary of the Interior has singled out two agencies, the Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in its annual report required by The Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act, where it could not persuade a reasonable assurance of the integrity of their accounting systems.

Senator BURNS. I appreciate your report. I will be looking forward to the final report whenever you get it all done. You didn't do any work in Yellowstone Park and I was kind of looking forward that you might have done some work up there.

Just like I said a while ago, I think there is an agenda and until we get an accurate accounting of not only where the funds are going—it just seems like to me they are operating on a \$1.5 billion budget and the entry fees and the commissions on concessions is only up around \$85 million. Now that just doesn't sound right to me, that doesn't add up, for some reason or other.

I just have a feeling that we have got funds that are getting away from us somewhere, or whatever, happening, but I will just look forward to your final—I am coming down on the side that I think we have to—there is going to have to be outside audit. I just don't think we are going to be able to handle this internally and to bring any credibility of the organization or our organization to the American public.

I thank the Chairman.

Mr. HANSEN. Mrs. Cubin?

Mrs. CUBIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't remember the cartoon character that said, "I have seen the enemy and it is us."

Senator BURNS. Pogo.

Mrs. CUBIN. But that is the feeling I have.

Senator BURNS. That dates a lot of us.

Mrs. CUBIN. The impression I get is that we have acquired more lands than we can afford to administer.

According to your testimony, some park managers say that complying with Federal laws, the Clean Air Act, and some of those have increased their operational costs a lot. So, there again, we are our own worst enemy.

Could you tell me how those laws have increased operational costs?

Mr. DUFFUS. Yes. For example, at Yosemite, they spent \$100,000 to fix OSHA violations. I should point out that none of the park managers we talked to were complaining or that they didn't agree with the merits or the goals of these additional laws, but the fact is it is taking park funds and spreading them over more requirements.

Also, at Yosemite, about \$40,000 was spent on asbestos, radon and lead paint abatement. So, it does impact on their budget, there is no question about it.

Mrs. CUBIN. Well, I think I heard you say that they thought the expenditures were justified; is that right?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, sure. I mean, I don't think they said that they would not be for asbestos removal nor for not improving the air and water quality and so forth. So, they did not disagree with the goals or the merits of these laws.

Mrs. CUBIN. Well, you see, that is sort of where I am coming from. I think if it is part of just what needs to be done for good business, for good management of the parks, then I don't think it is an accurate statement to make that due to these laws, the expenditures have increased.

I would think that, for example, asbestos abatement. In my own town we had to close a high school for a year for asbestos abatement and the next year it was decided it would have been better to leave it alone.

So, I am talking about expenditures that might be excessive to abide by Federal laws. Were any of those discovered?

Mr. DUFFUS. I don't know.

Mr. FOWLER. No, no. The only point we were trying to make in raising that whole issue was to get at the issue of given increases in real terms, in the amount of money parks are getting, what is happening to those real increases?

What we found was compliance with over 20 different Federal laws was using up a lot of, a good portion, of the increases that they were experiencing. Our point was simply to say that that is factual, not to make any judgments about the value or the merit of that.

Mrs. CUBIN. I just really would do better with a yes or no. So, there was not money spent that they didn't think needed to be spent, either to protect the public or to comply with whatever regulations they thought would be good for the environment.

Mr. FOWLER. No.

Mrs. CUBIN. Okay.

So, that argument kind of falls short with me, then, because if that is what you would have to do just for proper operation of a business or proper operation of a park, it just falls short with me.

Has the Equal Opportunity Employment Act affected expenditures in the system?

Mr. DUFFUS. Again, the Park Service managers we talked to pointed out that it is more of a process thing, it is a focus of staff, having staff to work on recordkeeping, merit programs, reporting and so forth, that has diverted staff from day-to-day park activities. So, from that standpoint, they believe it has.

Mrs. CUBIN. How about the other environmental laws they have had to comply with? Do they have to go through all the paperwork a private business has to go through?

Mr. DUFFUS. Oh, sure. I am sure they have to.

Mrs. CUBIN. Okay. Then, you just list for me the three main reasons, or four main reasons, that there is not enough money in the park system to maintain it and to make it a good system.

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, at the 12 parks we went to there were two consistent factors that impacted on operating budgets and these were the additional operating requirements, which we were just talking about, and increased visitation. These were the two factors that the park managers at 11 of the 12 parks pointed out to us that were impacting on their operating budgets.

Mrs. CUBIN. So, they did not think it was land acquisition and more new parks in the system and all of that because they could not think that, because maybe their park would be one that really should not belong in the park system, I guess.

Mr. DUFFUS. I don't know if they brought that up to us, or not, but as we indicated in our testimony, each time you add a unit to the system, it has long-term impact. It is going to impact on the infrastructure and development needs and it is also going to compete for Federal funding, so it does have an impact.

Mr. STALEY. Let me add one other item here. A frequent comment we heard from the park managers was the fact that their operating budgets were not increasing commensurately with the increased costs of some of these new Federal laws, additional Federal laws, and even day-to-day operating expenses.

For example, at Yosemite, the simple task of taking the trash to the local county landfill, the fee for that increased from \$25 to \$50 a ton over a 5-year period and when you are generating 35 tons a day of trash at Yosemite, that is almost a doubling from about \$300,000 to \$600,000 just for that simple task over a 5-year period and that was eating into their budget tremendously.

Mrs. CUBIN. Thank you.

Senator THOMAS. The Senator from Minnesota has joined us. Would you have a statement or questions?

STATEMENT OF HON. ROD GRAMS, U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA

Senator GRAMS. Well, I have an opening statement but I would just like to submit it for the record. It talks about a lot of the concerns that we have.

[The prepared statement of Senator Grams follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROD GRAMS, U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA

I would like to thank Chairman Thomas and Chairman Hansen for holding this joint hearing on a subject that is of concern to our national well-being: the Health of our National Parks. I also want to thank Chairman Murkowski and Chairman Young of their respective full committees for being with us today.

As we all know, the National Park Service was created to provide for public access to some of America's most pristine cultural and natural resources, while at the same time protecting our public lands from possible overuse and mismanagement.

While I commend the Park Service for trying to achieve these dual goals, I find the information contained in today's testimony to be quite devastating for our national parks and for those who enjoy them.

The General Accounting Office has placed justified blame on the shoulders of Congress for the current situation in our nation's parks. For instance, GAO has cited that additional operating retirements are passed on to the parks by as many as 20 different federal laws without providing adequate funding. This should serve as an understanding of how unfunded federal mandates dangerously effect local governments and businesses, but also our own parks.

Since 1984, Congress has created 31 new parks—further burdening current operations and maintenance needs. These authorizations have led to an intense competitive atmosphere that does little but hurt our existing parks and help create a 4 billion dollar maintenance backlog. I firmly believe Congress needs to continue looking at ideas which limit financial burdens on our parks.

It's not all Congress's fault, however. Today's testimony should demonstrate how unaccountability and inefficiency have also helped create the current state of some of our national parks. It is Congress's role to oversee executive departments' actions and that is why we are here today.

In addition to what we have heard today, I would also like to mention last month's testimony by Joyce Fleischman, Deputy Inspector General of the Department of the Interior, who told members of Congress that NPS could not produce auditable financial statements for the past three years. This inadequate record-keeping, among other things, means that the Park Service cannot always bill for the funds that it is owed. This financial misuse does nothing but hurt our parks and is a travesty to our taxpayers.

Individuals, families and businesses all have to practice fiscal responsibility. The National Park Service must be equally accountable to the taxpayers. I think members of these Committees should consider this, particularly when the Park Service wants to purchase additional land in fiscal year 1996.

I sincerely hope today's joint hearing marks another important step towards making government more accountable to its taxpayers.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank the respective Chairmen for conducting this hearing. I would also like to thank the General Accounting Office for appearing before us today and providing us with some preliminary information. I look forward to seeing your final report this summer.

I think one of the biggest concerns that I have and I apologize I wasn't here for the opening statements, but just quickly, I know a lot of the concern is the amount of dollars that we have to maintain the parks at the level that they are now. I know in my own State of Minnesota, for instance, if I can find the information here, we have questions about the Voyageurs National Park.

But the one question that I would like to start with is: with all the problems that the Park Service is facing in trying to meet its demands or its needs, \$38 billion backlogs in land acquisition, \$4 billion short in the funds that it needs for maintenance, yet we try to increase the acreage of national parks, such as in Minnesota alone, the proposition to spend another million dollars to acquire another 250 acres for the Voyageurs National Park.

Is it time that the Park Service should cut back a little bit and better manage the parks that it now has; or are we going to be faced with asking for additional dollars and as we know, the dollars are not going to be there; or are we going to the taxpayer or the visitors to the park and say, "We are going to triple the cost, say, for you to get into the park."

There has got to be a point where we have got to be better managers, and all, for these facilities. I don't know, just throwing that out for general comments.

Mr. DUFFUS. I would say that one of the choices we pointed out in our statement today was that the growth of the park system can be limited and the bill that was introduced that was referred to as the Hefley/Vento bill would address that in terms of setting criteria for new additions to the system.

As I indicated, any time that you add a new unit to the park system, it competes for limited funding and it impacts on infrastructure and development needs. So it is problematic, there is no question about it.

Senator GRAMS. Is it time, then, to maybe scale back on these ambitious goals of adding more and more acreage to our park system? Some of the principal findings, some of the information we have is that in each park visited, the trails, campgrounds and other facilities were declining. Further, most parks do not have sufficient information to determine whether the overall condition of many natural and cultural resources are deteriorating, improving or remaining the same.

It sounds like, just like in every other agency, that we are running up against the wall. It is not time to point fingers at each other on where there is the blame, but where are we going to maybe pull back and do the best job we can.

Mr. DUFFUS. We think the time has come for some difficult choices to be made. As I indicated, limit the growth, or perhaps reduce the level of services to only those that can be realistically provided.

These are not easy decisions, but we have come to the conclusion it is time to make these decisions because the situation, we do not think, is going to get better with the status quo.

Senator GRAMS. Just two very quick questions here. Would you support, say, this proposal from my home State of Minnesota. The Clinton administration has proposed to purchase more acres of land, including 250 acres for the controversial Voyageurs National Park.

According to your testimony, I assume one of the decisions Congress might have to make is to possibly control or freeze the amount of land that the Park Service enrolls. Would you support spending another million dollars to acquire these 250 acres in a time when there is real budget crunches?

Mr. DUFFUS. We have not looked at that so it would be difficult for me to offer a definitive answer. But again, I go back to saying that you need an overall plan and, you need an overall strategy and criteria for putting new units into the system.

If it meets that criteria, if it is a natural resource, if it is an historic site, if it meets the criteria that is developed, then, maybe it should be added, but if it does not, then other decisions have to be made.

Senator GRAMS. What about raising fees? I know some have talked about doubling, some might have to be tripling to be able to bring in the revenues the Park Service needs and of course, like anything else, if you have higher fees, you are going to have fewer visitors.

I know I have talked to some people who have objected to this because they say their taxpayers have already been taxed once to put money into the National Park Service and now to even go and use it, they are going to have to pay even more and they consider it unfair.

Would you support increasing the fees, which I look at is just another hidden tax or a tax increase?

Mr. DUFFUS. We think that fee increases have to be looked at very hard. We did some work, and I will ask Ned to help me, a couple years ago on concession fees and the government was only getting about 2 percent, which amounted to—I forget the numbers—

Mr. WOODWARD. We had previously done some work on concessions and the return governmentwide was about 2 percent and the Park Service was consistent with that, so there is some potential from concession fees.

There may also be some opportunities for increases in other fees, including entrance fees and user fees within the Park Service, as well.

Senator GRAMS. I think that is the most questionable, is the entrance or the user fees and where I hear the most objection. People say they have already been taxed once to provide for the park system and now they are even going to be asked to pay more at the gate to get in, not counting the concessions that they consume while they are there.

Mr. WOODWARD. If I can just continue with one point on the fees, I think there are many parks that don't charge any entrance fees at all. There are some parks—for example, the Statue of Liberty, where if you charged \$2.00 per visitor, you could cover the operating cost of the entire park.

So, looking at it from that perspective, there are certain needs the parks have, and how do you address those needs. Adding fees to that equation is one way of potentially addressing those needs.

Senator GRAMS. But those are fees on top of a huge budget already that the Park Service is getting?

Mr. WOODWARD. That is correct. Those would be additional revenues to the parks.

Senator GRAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator THOMAS. One perk of being chairman is that you get to interject yourself. One of the things I have heard and I just want to say it before we go on, is that unless there is an incentive for that park manager to get the money, unless the money goes back to the park, he isn't going to make the effort to collect the dough.

That has got to be changed, it seems to me. They don't do a very good job of collecting in Yellowstone because they don't get very much of the money, and therefore, don't divert the money to collect the fee.

Mr. DUFFUS. That is correct.

Mr. HANSEN. The gentleman from California, Mr. Radanovich.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make a couple of comments. I was on the county board of supervisors in Mariposa County. We dealt with the solid waste issue at Yosemite National Park, and increasing the dumping fees in our county dump was due to solid waste legislation coming from here and also the State of California. So I am confirming Congress-

woman Barbara Cubin's comments about how much of this is due to increased regulation and taxation.

I really have to say that I concur with Senator Craig when he is mentioning the inevitability at least of having to downsize the National Park System in order to meet the obligations that it currently has. But the only other comments I wanted to make were in addition to that, in ways of helping park systems run more efficiently, using Yosemite as an example, I think that working with the local agencies and also privatizing some of the functions there, in working with local agencies I think you would agree that Yosemite National Park is probably one of the most impacted parks in the system, particularly with the transportation issues that it has.

There has been kind of an autonomous reaction to the National Park System or by the National Park System when it comes to utilizing satellite communities to help solve the transportation problem in that area, using the satellite communities as staging areas and shuttling visitors back and forth to the park. There is a real resistance, I think, on the part of the National Park Service, due simply—I do not know if it is turf protection or what, but if there was more attention paid to the resources of the outlying communities on the local level, I think it would help offset some of the costs of operating the park.

I have got people in my district who would die for Yosemite National Park. Raising money and from private sources to help take care of some of those problems I think also was discouraged, to some degree, about 8 to 10 years ago by the National Park Service, because I think that it was an issue of turf protection. There was a lot of private money being raised for improvements inside the park, and I think that that is really something that should not be discouraged. Rather, it should be something that should be encouraged for the benefit of the park system.

I often think that if Yosemite is going to die it is going to be worried to death by a lot of people in the park system who sit there and fret over the fact that we now have rainbow and brown and brook trout up in the High Sierras rather than the native fish that used to be there 100 years ago. I mean, get over it. That is just something that happened. I think your resources could be better spent on actually solving transportation problems and different things like that.

My main comments, though, are working with local agencies as a means of meeting some of those infrastructure and operating costs would not be a bad idea, and there are plenty of park system devotees of every park in this system that would be willing to come up with a lot of private resources in handling some of the problems that are there, and I do not know whether your panel has investigated it or not, but it certainly is worth looking into out in addition to down-sizing the National Park System.

Mr. STALEY. We did not contact any of the local communities surrounding Yosemite. But we did contact people at the Yosemite Fund, which is a prime contributor of additional funds. In fact, they have contributed about \$3 million over the last 6 to 7 years. One of the key items those funds have been expended on is trail maintenance, which is at the short end of the totem pole in a lot of ways in the park's normal operating budget in that additional

monies have gone in directly to a good share of the trail maintenance. There is a lot more to be done, but that was one of the key areas where the monies were directed.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Well, it may be that that activity, that private contribution, I think was somewhat discouraged, at least 8 or 10 years ago. It may be worth looking at. It occurs to me that that type of stuff was discouraged rather than encouraged.

Mr. STALEY. We also met with the superintendent there, of course. He would have liked to have seen greater ability to solicit greater funds. That might be what you are addressing, too. But one of the ideas that he had that was put into practice was the personalized license plates featuring Yosemite, and through that I believe about \$20 out of every \$40 every year for those people that have those plates, that is an additional source of monies that goes to the park.

Mr. DUFFUS. One thing that we pointed out when we talked about choices in the area of increasing revenues, was that there should be more encouragement of private sector partnerships. I think that gets to what you are speaking to, Mr. Radanovich.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Right. And also I would point out in defense of the satellite communities and the economies on the outlying areas, I think there was a proposal to increase the rate from \$5 to \$15 admissions, and you would destroy the local economies in raising fees.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator THOMAS. I have been impressed with what the GAO does in their studies, but I have always felt a little bit that we do not follow enough with some solutions, some remedies. We talk about the problem, but I am not clear, still, on this accountability. Are there parks who cannot produce the detail of how their funds were expended?

Mr. DUFFUS. Oh, I believe they could tell you how they were spending their funds. No one is holding them accountable for the expenditure of those funds. They have a lot of autonomy and flexibility. Flexibility is not bad in itself, but they have a lot of autonomy on how they spend the funds. They have an operating budget, and if they decide to spend the funds to maintain a trail as opposed to perhaps fixing some problems in the visitor's center, whatever it is, they have that flexibility to do it.

Senator THOMAS. So when you talk about accountability, you are not talking about a lack of being able to produce data to show where the money was spent, you are talking about accountability not spending it where somebody else thinks it ought to be spent?

Mr. DUFFUS. Showing results. Making sure that the money that they have, which is limited, is producing something effective.

Senator THOMAS. Let us then go to the performance that is expected. How does the superintendent in this particular park know what results are expected?

Mr. DUFFUS. I do not believe he does at this point. That is one thing that the Park Service has started to look at. The Government Performance Results Act requires all Federal agencies to go to results-oriented management, I think by 1999, and the Park Service recently told us that they have draft plans where they are going

to enter into performance contracts with their park managers which would produce results-oriented activities.

Senator THOMAS. In some of the hearings we had last year, you kind of went away with the notion that, well, we do not have anything to do with it, it is all up to the park superintendent to run the thing, and these guys sort of left the impression that the Park Service Director does not really have any control over it. I cannot imagine that that is the case, but there must not be an established criteria of what performance you expect to measure. Is that correct?

Mr. DUFFUS. That is correct at this point in time, yes, sir.

Mr. FOWLER. That is correct.

Senator THOMAS. So that is really the problem, is some identified criteria that you can measure against. You have to let the manager know what it is you are measuring before you can expect him to perform.

Mr. DUFFUS. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Senator THOMAS. And there is an absence of that, is that correct?

Mr. DUFFUS. Correct.

Senator THOMAS. Then this criteria for closing, I understand that you, from your studies, would agree to establishment of a criteria which would say this meets a criteria for a Federal park and this one does not?

Mr. DUFFUS. That is right. We think that is one choice that is available and should be pursued.

Senator THOMAS. But as a matter of fact, the 12 that you studied, you just looked at those, you did not really look at the overall impact of new park openings on the overall park activity?

Mr. DUFFUS. No, we did not.

Senator THOMAS. And as a matter of fact, each of these except one had a real increase during this 10-year period.

Mr. DUFFUS. That is correct.

Senator THOMAS. You would think in most instances that an increase in use, an increase in customers if you please, would produce more revenue. On the other hand, you suggest to us that the increase in customers has caused a financial problem. What does that say to you?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, I guess it presumes that all those increased visitors paid a fee. I am not so sure that is the case. But again, the costs are perhaps rising faster than the fee collections.

Senator THOMAS. Would it seem to make sense to you that there is a basic cost to maintaining the park, but that the incremental costs ought to be the responsibility of the visitor?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, yes. We did some rough calculations. Nationwide, if you look at the \$85 million that was collected in fees in 1993, each park is getting about 30 cents, and that is a very rough calculation.

Senator THOMAS. 30 percent per visitor.

Mr. DUFFUS. 30 cents per visitor.

Senator THOMAS. 30 cents per visitor?

Mr. DUFFUS. 30 cents, based on fee revenues of \$85 million. And it is costing them, on the other hand, about \$3.56. So there is kind of a mismatch there in terms of what each visitor is providing in terms of a fee and what it costs the park in terms of visitation.

These are very rough calculations, and it just relates to visitation and operating budgets.

Senator THOMAS. Do you have a number on the cost to collect the fee?

Mr. DUFFUS. No.

Senator THOMAS. I would not be surprised if it is more than 30 cents.

Mr. DUFFUS. I am sure it is. We do not have that.

Senator THOMAS. Well, we have decisions to make, and they are fairly basic, and most everybody agrees to what they are. Would you just observe as to why we do not move more quickly in resolving it?

Mr. DUFFUS. I do not know if I want to do that. Well, I mean, those are tough decisions to make.

Senator THOMAS. Sacrifice yourself.

Mr. DUFFUS. Yes. I do not think they are easy decisions to make, and it is probably going to involve a change in culture.

Senator THOMAS. Well, what bothers me a little, and I will stop, but agency after agency comes up and talks around and around, and it seems to me that it would be reasonable to expect an agency to come and say here is what we see the problem, here is what we think the answer is, here are the changes that we think ought to be made. Now, whether they are made or not is another matter. Is that not a reasonable expectation from an agency?

Mr. DUFFUS. Yes, I think it is.

Senator THOMAS. We do not seem to get that.

Mr. STALEY. I might add one point here. I think the Park Service should perhaps do a better job of telling you what the impact of not doing certain things is, or the impact, say, for example, of not having sufficient baseline data on the resource. What is the impact, what is the result, short-term, intermediate, and long-term? And then put in place a short-term/long-term goal to achieve sufficient scientific baseline data. A big step begins with little steps, so if you proceed in a well-thought-out timetable track to achieve that end result, then perhaps you could monitor the progress they have made.

Mr. HANSEN. It seems self-evident that the regional director will take it upon himself to have the responsibility of a certain amount of parks which is given him. Now, let us say this regional director then sits down with the park superintendent, which I assume is correct, and says let us set your budget for the coming year. That budget is then set, and I assume the criteria is predicated on the needs of that particular park, some of the routine things, and maybe some additional things. Is that a correct assumption, that a regional director sets a park budget with a park superintendent? I mean, it just seems so self-evident it would have to be.

Ms. RUSTEN. Yes. My understanding is that each park gets an across-the-board base increase, the same amount to cover cost of inflation and operating costs. On top of that, different parks get additional funding for special projects or special needs or something over and beyond the base increase.

Mr. HANSEN. Okay, but for the routine stuff they all go through that rigmarole, I guess. So the regional director knows what that is and says all right, the regional director in Denver knows what

it is going to be for, say, Yellowstone or Zion, Bryce, one of those parks. So that is kind of a fixed figure, right? So we assume that we are accountable for that and everybody agrees on that. Now, on top of that there are some additional things because of a uniqueness about a certain park. It needs the following: Maybe the roads or something is bad so they have to add that. Is that correct?

Ms. RUSTEN. Correct.

Mr. HANSEN. So then we all assume that that accountability is taken care of, that we know the accountability of that particular park, right? Okay, at the end of the year, does it change? At the end of the year when we actually know what they really spent, is there a substantial change?

Mr. DUFFUS. On what they have spent the funds for?

Mr. HANSEN. Yes.

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, I am not so sure. You know, you could go on a case-by-case basis and you could find out what they spent the funds for, I am sure, but you are not holding them accountable. They are going to decide at the local level what priorities they need to spend the funds for, and where those funds should be spent.

Mr. HANSEN. Well, why should it be such a big shock to us if everyone agrees that there are X amount of dollars are going to be spent by the X-Y-Z park, and then at the end it has got to change because we are always bellyaching? I mean, the whole thing we have talked about is nobody is responsible. And so something obviously changes, or should not Congress be saying goodness sakes, you said you were going to spend X amount of dollars, but then at the end we get all mad and excited because apparently no one was accountable. I am just assuming that something changes along the line.

Does anybody want to respond to that? I mean, why should we be excited if the regional director says this is what it is, and we all say fine?

Mr. DUFFUS. We would want to know what was achieved with the expenditure of those monies and whether or not they were spent effectively, and whether a meaningful result was accomplished that relates to the types of problems that exist. If parks have a backlog, and it is a sizeable backlog, what is being done to reduce that backlog? So if you are going to spend limited funds and you are going to spend it for the backlog, then let us make sure that some meaningful result is accomplished and they start to chip away at the problem that they have.

Mr. HANSEN. Does anyone say, after the park superintendent uses the money and the year has passed and the money has been used, does anyone now say did you spend the money where you said you were going to a year ago when we gave you the budget? Does somebody come back and say all right, we said you were going to get X amount of dollars to run Yellowstone, did you use it, and what you said you were going to do, did that equal at the end of the year when the money was spent?

Mr. FOWLER. What we learned in our review is the conversations that take place at that level are largely more process-oriented exchanges between the park superintendent and the regional folks. Did you prepare the plans? Did you send in the paperwork on time? Those process kind of questions, as opposed to what did you

accomplish that you were supposed to accomplish with the money that you spent.

Mr. HANSEN. I guess the frustration I have is I have been on the military committee for too long and I have seen these military folks say this is what we are going to spend the dollars for, and we all agree and we give them the money and we go through heck to get it through here and it goes, and at the end we go back and we now start using about the next year. If we back up and say did you really spend the money for that, we rarely find that they do. I mean, some guys say, well no, we really did not.

It seems like, boy, if we can just get by Congress and get that over with and get you guys happy and get through these crazy meetings we have to go through, we will do what we damn well want to do. And I find the Park Service that way, and that is, of course, the position here. I think they are very honest when they say we are going to spend it and they feel it at that point. But it does not happen that way after the year is expended. And I really feel in a way it is our fault, if I may say, Mr. Thomas. In a way, I find that we just ignore it. We worry about the next year. We really ought to have an accountability for did you spend it the way you thought you were going to? And of course there has got to be some flexibility. We all realize that. But I think that is the frustration that I have at this point.

Excuse me. I see my time is up.

Senator THOMAS. Well, I think we are probably grinding down towards the end a bit. I guess I am satisfied that this accountability question which I have mentioned every time seems to be more an analysis of the resource. You mentioned, and I am confused whether you are talking about financial accountability or resource accountability, maybe you are talking about both, but you talk about accountability an awful lot.

Mr. DUFFUS. Both.

Senator THOMAS. So what do you suggest we do with fees?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, we think that fees should be looked to be increased and returned to the park to benefit the park that generated the increased fees. But as we said before, and I hate to bring this up again and perhaps create confusion, any increase in fees that go back to the park have to be accompanied by increased accountability over how those increased funds are spent, so that we are accomplishing results, measurable results.

Senator THOMAS. So the two factors you talk about are that you think it is justifiable to raise fees, and those fees ought to stay where they are collected.

Mr. DUFFUS. That is correct.

Senator THOMAS. You know, we talked a little bit about this discretion that is used in collecting, and the fact is that when they are designated to collect them I think the law says they shall collect them. Are you familiar with that?

Mr. DUFFUS. I believe that is correct, yes.

Senator THOMAS. So that has to be something that we talk about. The concessions, you say 2 percent, 2 percent of what?

Mr. DUFFUS. I forget the exact numbers. Do you remember, Ned?

Mr. WOODWARD. It is 2 percent of our gross revenues, the sales.

Mr. DUFFUS. In terms of numbers, the return to the government was very small in relation to what was collected.

Senator THOMAS. What do you think is the purpose of the concessions?

Mr. DUFFUS. Of the concession operations?

Senator THOMAS. What is the prime function there?

Mr. DUFFUS. I think the prime function is to add to the quality of the visitor experience.

Senator THOMAS. Provide service?

Mr. DUFFUS. Yes, provide service.

Senator THOMAS. It is not necessarily designated to be a fund-raising activity?

Mr. DUFFUS. I do not believe so, no.

Senator THOMAS. Do you have any feeling about—well, that is getting off into something else.

Mr. Chairman, do you have any questions?

Mr. HANSEN. Not really. I just would like to say that it amazes me, the Forest Service, they have twice as many visitors as the Park Service. They spend less money for law enforcement. Maybe that is unfair to ask you this, but how can they pull it off? How can they do it with less money, and have more people come than the Park Service? Just a different type of thing they do?

Mr. DUFFUS. While they have different missions, there are a lot of similarities and we have talked about that. This could be an example of a best management practice that the Forest Service is following that could have replication for the Park Service.

And it is one thing that we talked about in restructuring. The Park Service needs to look beyond their jurisdictional boundaries for opportunities to achieve efficiencies. And perhaps what the Forest Service is doing has some applicability to the Park Service.

I just don't know specifically what they are doing and how it could apply but it is certainly something that should be looked into.

Mr. HANSEN. Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator THOMAS. Just finally, you selected, and I understand, seeking to reduce the scope of the study some, you selected 12. Do you have a feel for how representative those 12 are of the entire 386, or whatever it is, parks?

Mr. DUFFUS. Well, when we selected the 12, we did it based on discussions with the Director of the Park Service and former directors, as well as the National Parks Conservation Association.

What we sought to do was to try to make these parks that we were going to visit as representative as possible. We included parks, we included battlefields, we included national monuments, historic sites and a seashore. We also attempted to get some geographic dispersion. But, the results of what we found in these 12 parks cannot be extrapolated to the remaining units. So, what we attempted to do was try to get as broad a representation as possible in selecting the parks.

Senator THOMAS. Well, we thank you very much. I hope, as we consider this, and there is a number of other issues—whenever you open up issues and talk about them, and that is one of the good things that is going on in this Congress, in my opinion, is that a lot of things are being opened up.

I hope that everyone will stipulate that all of us value national parks and the idea that you might say this park really ought to belong to a city or belong to a county or does not fit a criteria, it should not be presumed that person does not like parks.

The fact is, what we are trying to find is a better way to strengthen a national park system and I hope that that is what happens here.

So, the record will remain open. I suspect that later, when your report is completed, which I understand will be in the summer, July or June——

Mr. DUFFUS. That is correct.

Senator THOMAS [continuing]. That we might want to do this again when other people have had an opportunity to read the report and then come in and share their feelings about what you have said. It would have been unfair to ask the Park Service to have been here today, or any other persons, too, because they have not had a chance to look at it.

So, we thank you all for what you are doing and look forward to hearing from you again. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

RESPONSES OF THE GAO TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR THOMAS

Question 1. What do you mean when you say there is a need for improved accountability?

Answer. The Park Service has a decentralized organization that provides park superintendents with a great deal of discretion about how operating funds are spent. Under these circumstances, it is critical that the agency have good systems of accountability in order to ensure that limited budget resources are used most effectively by park managers.

However, this is not currently the case. The Park Service does not have adequate data and controls to provide managers with reliable information about many key activities throughout the park system. For example, the Park Service does not know (1) the nature or extent of many problems associated with the resources it is mandated to preserve and protect, (2) the effectiveness of measures taken to deal with the problems, or (3) the activities and programs to which the limited available resources can be allocated to do the most good. Until the agency is better able to ensure that limited park operating funds are used on the highest priority needs of the parks, the agency's ability to accomplish its mission efficiently and effectively will continue to be hampered.

Question 2. Page 12 of your written testimony states that Park Service officials indicated they plan to improve accountability—did they say how? And which types of accountability are they improving: fiscal, resource protection, or other?

Answer. Park Service officials indicated to us that they plan to move toward a system of performance contracts. According to these officials, the performance contracts are to be used for all agency managers, including park superintendents. They are intended to help the agency focus on what is being accomplished with the money being spent. Relying on performance contracts to improve accountability is an outgrowth of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and, if implemented properly, will help address both fiscal and programmatic accountability within the agency. However, performance contracts alone will not solve the accountability problems facing the agency. For performance contracts to work, performance must be able to be measured. A prerequisite for measuring performance is reliable data and effective internal controls—two things that are now lacking within the Park Service.

Question 3. Who in the Park Service is accountable for ensuring that the parks are operated in an effective and efficient manner? Are those individuals held accountable and if so, how are they held accountable?

Answer. In theory, accountability starts with the Director and cascades down through all management levels throughout the agency, including the park superintendents. However, in practice, the Park Service does not have data systems or controls in place to ensure that managers are actually held accountable. Further, until such systems are in place, moving to performance contracts will not get the job done since measuring performance depends on the availability of reliable programmatic and financial data—something the Park Service does not now have.

Question 4. Was the Park Service able to explain why Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, established over 50 years ago, has never had an archaeological survey and has no general management plan, the primary planning document for any park? What have management decisions been based on all these years?

Answer. Officials at Hopewell Furnace said that this occurred because of limited funding. There was a general management plan issued in 1964, but it is out of date. In the meantime, management decisions have been based on the best professional judgment of the superintendent.

Question 5. In addition to regular operating funds, parks can be awarded special monies to conduct scientific research. Do you know if the Park Service has require-

ments for parks to report how they spent such funds and to decide how the results will be used to better manage resources?

Answer. Park managers are required to issue annual reports that discuss how they spent these "special" monies. However, these reports do not discuss how the money was used to accomplish specific goals or objectives. Further, we know of no requirements governing how the results of research conducted using such monies are to be used.

Question 6. In your written suggestions for dealing with problems noted in the study you state, "the Park Service needs to look for ways to stretch its limited resources by operating more efficiently." Does your use of the word "stretch" indicate you feel there are places in the Park Service budget where there is room to give?

Answer. Yes, potentially. As the Park Service continues with its restructuring effort, it needs to look for every opportunity to save money by identifying ways to improve the efficiency of its operations through collaboration with other federal land management agencies. Following this strategy could result in identifying ways to work with other agencies to refocus, combine or eliminate missions, programs, activities or field locations. To the extent this occurs, the resources now available to the Park Service would be "stretched" and more could be accomplished at current funding levels.

Question 7. As you may know, the Park Service Restructuring Plan calls for groups of parks or "clusters" to share the expertise of scientists and other specialists. From your study results, do you think that such an arrangement will improve accountability for resource stewardship or allow each park to blame the others in the cluster for the fact that their research didn't get done?

Answer. It is difficult to say what the impact of "clusters" will be. Moving to clusters will not necessarily improve or impede accountability. The key to how this part of the Park Service's restructuring plan will impact accountability is how it is implemented. On one hand, moving scientific and other specialized skills closer to the parks could help resource management at the park level by having scientific expertise more accessible. On the other hand, there will be competition for this expertise among parks. Accordingly, it is critical that the Park Service develop a plan that clearly delineates how competing park priorities will be addressed.

Question 8. In light of GAO's recent study on Park Service accountability and management, do you think that the agency's new emphasis on decentralized leadership will improve care for park resources or compromise them?

Answer. It depends on what, if any, system is put in place to ensure that park resource needs get addressed. An increased emphasis on decentralization needs to be accompanied by improvements in the agency's ability to hold managers accountable for their decisions. If improved accountability is built into the Park Service's reorganization, further decentralization may not have any effect on the agency's care for park resources. However, without improved accountability, further decentralization could be a step backwards as far as the quality of the agency's resource stewardship is concerned.

Question 9. What has been the overall inflation-adjusted percentage change in the Park Service's operating appropriations between 1985 and 1993?

Answer. The Park Service's operating appropriations increased by 18 percent (inflation-adjusted) from 1985 to 1993.

Question 10. For the park units visited by GAO, what was the inflation-adjusted percentage change in park operating appropriations between 1985 and 1993?

Answer. In real terms, the budgets increased at 11 of the 12 parks we visited. These increases ranged from about 5 percent at Hopewell Furnace to about 200 percent at Pecos National Historic Park. At Glacier National Park, the budget declined about 2 percent in real terms from 1985 to 1993.

Question 11. Given the conditions in the parks which you described in your testimony, one might assume that the parks' budgets had likely decreased in recent years, but that obviously is not the case, is it?

Answer. No.

Question 12. What is the biggest cost item in the park operating budget?

Answer. Staff salaries and benefits consume most of the parks' operating budgets. For example, at Hopewell Furnace, 90 percent of the Park budget goes to salaries and benefits. At Glacier, it amounts to about 85 percent. At Lake Mead it's about 76 percent—which is also the average for the 12 parks we visited.

Question 13. What do the parks spend the remaining funds on?

Answer. The remaining funds are spent on all the supplies and services needed to operate and maintain a park, serve the visitors, and manage resources. Examples of these expenditures include utilities for park buildings, supplies and tools for maintaining the infrastructure, waste disposal fees, tests to monitor park water systems, gas for park vehicles, park brochures, and computers and office supplies.

Question 14. You said in your statement that park budgets have increased. Why haven't the parks made more progress in serving visitors and managing resources?

Answer. Our work has shown that there are two primary reasons: additional operating requirements, and increased visitation.

Question 15. If additional operating requirements are part of the reason, can you give some examples of these and describe how they affect parks?

Answer. Park superintendents identified a number of increased operational requirements during our visits. They include such things as radon, lead paint, and asbestos abatement; removal of underground storage tanks; increased water testing requirements; increased costs of training and background checks for rangers; cost of living increases; modifying park facilities so that they are handicapped accessible; complying with NEPA, NHPA, and RCRA; and addressing OSHA violations, just to name a few.

They affect parks by increasing the demands on them, thereby diverting attention from everyday park management, and can add costs as well. For example, park managers must spend more time on reporting requirements necessitated by new laws, regulations, and requirements which diverts their attention from everyday park responsibilities such as serving visitors and managing resources. An example of additional costs is background checks on park law enforcement personnel—which have increased service wide from about \$300 to over \$2,000 per check.

Question 16. Where managers cited additional requirements such as NEPA and federal regulations for waste water treatment systems as draining operating funds, are they actually using the diverted funds to meet the requirements? Do park fiscal records show a clear breakdown of how funds are really spent?

Answer. We did not review individual park fiscal records to determine if they provide a clear breakdown of how funds are spent.

Question 17. What kind of fees are collected in NPS units?

Answer. The most common fees are entrance fees, user fees, concession fees and building use fees.

Question 18. How much money is collected from these fees?

Answer. In fiscal year 1993, the Park Service collected about \$47 million in entrance fees, about \$20 million in user fees, and about \$18 million in concession and building use fees.

Question 19. On average, how much in fees does the Park Service get from each visit?

Answer. Using servicewide operating budget and visitation data, on average, the Park Service collects about 30 cents per visit.

Question 20. What would fees be at parks if they tried to cover their operating costs?

Answer. Servicewide, the fee would be about \$3.60 per visit. At the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island, a fee of about \$2 per visit would cover the park's operating costs. At Harpers Ferry it would be about \$8, while at Denali it would be about \$13.

Question 21. Can you elaborate on what ideas you have about increasing park revenues?

Answer. Other sources of revenue could include increasing park fees, such as entrance fees, concession fees, and fees for other in-park services. This may also include allowing parks to retain more in-park collected revenues. In addition, park managers could perhaps be encouraged to use more entrepreneurial efforts or partnership arrangements with other parties to address park needs. For example, Yosemite National Park and the State of California have entered into an agreement whereby the park shares in the annual revenues generated from personalized state license plates featuring the park.

Question 22. Another option you suggested was to look at limiting the growth of the park system. Are you suggesting we need to shut down parks?

Answer. Not necessarily. What we mean is that the Park Service is facing a difficult situation. Existing park units have billions of dollars in unmet needs. To the extent that the system is permitted to grow, associated infrastructure and development needs will also grow. Limiting growth or perhaps even reducing the number of parks is one alternative that needs to be considered.

Question 23. You mentioned that another area to look at is the level of visitor services that can realistically be provided with available resources. Can you tell us more about that?

Answer. The Park Service could, for example, limit operations to fewer hours per day or fewer days per year, limit the number of visitors, temporarily close some facilities or reduce services provided to visitors. Choices such as these, however, should be made by the Park Service only after developing a carefully thought-out strategy and consulting with the Congress.

Question 24. How does the Park Service document infrastructure deterioration and develop estimated repair costs? Between your 1988 report on Maintenance Needs of the National Park Service and this study, has the service improved its ability to assess infrastructure conditions?

Answer. The Park Service developed a maintenance management system (MMS) to identify, document, and track infrastructure and day-to-day maintenance needs and costs in each park. However, we found that this system is being applied differently at each park. As a result, the information generated by this system is inconsistent and unreliable and cannot accurately reflect the overall needs of the park system.

Question 25. From your observations, were visitors provided adequate opportunities to experience and enjoy the primary resources at each park in your study?

Answer. While visitor opportunities varied depending on the time of year, at most parks, visitors had numerous and diverse opportunities to experience the parks' primary resources. However, our work clearly showed that the level of service provided to the visitors at the parks in our review is deteriorating.

Question 26. Prior to making cuts in services, did park officials predetermine how visitors would be affected and how many would be affected?

Answer. Park officials did not know the precise number of visitors that would be affected. However, they were knowledgeable about the impacts of most reductions on the quality of visitor services.

Question 27. To offset the effects of curtailing services, did park officials develop alternative ways to meet visitor needs? For example, at Bandelier National Monument when the museum was closed for over a year due to a leaky roof, did the Park Service develop an alternate way for visitors to understand and appreciate the park's story?

Answer. Our work focused on identifying specifically if and where visitor services were cut back. We did not examine the impact or effects of parks' decisions to curtail services or what, if any, alternatives were considered. In the specific case of Bandelier, to compensate for the closed museum and fewer guided walks, the park developed a self-guided walking tour brochure that explained park history and important sites.

Question 28. Which one of the 12 parks studied had not recently cut back on the level of visitor services? Why was this park different?

Answer. At Antietam National Battlefield, services were not cut back because there are not many labor-intensive visitor services to begin with. Visitors see a movie at the visitor center and may get an orientation there, and then go on a self-guided automobile tour of the park. In addition, the park has not experienced as large an increase in visitation as some other parks.

Question 29. Your written testimony notes several situations which posed health and safety threats to visitors and/or employees. Are officials at Shenandoah National Park waiting for a precariously hanging tree to fall on a visitor's car before they perform hazard tree removal? Will a visitor drowning at Padre Island be the impetus for reinstating lifeguards at the most used beaches?

Answer. In each instance cited, park managers indicated that these were just one of a number of unmet health, safety, and resource management needs in the parks. Further, park officials told us that difficult decisions must often be made regarding how to allocate limited park resources.

Question 30. You note that visitor satisfaction with parks is very high. How did you arrive at that conclusion?

Answer. Our statement was based on a 1994 University of Idaho study that indicated that 74 percent of visitors to national parks felt that the overall quality of visitor services was good or very good. The study surveyed over 18,000 visitors between 1988-1992.

Question 31. In your statement, you refer to the need for the Park Service to scientifically collect baseline data about the condition and trend of the park's cultural and natural resources; why is this important?

Answer. The Park Service is charged with preserving and protecting natural and cultural resources. To do this, managers must know the condition of the resources they have and what is happening to them over time. A systematic, scientific process for assessing resource condition and trend is essential for making appropriate resource and visitor management decisions. Without scientific baseline data, problems may not be caught or understood until it is too late to effectively deal with them.

Question 32. At any of the 12 parks studied did Park Service employees have comprehensive and current information on the park resources under their care (e.g. basic inventories of natural and cultural resources)?

Answer. Most of the parks did not have baseline information on most of the resources. Some parks had comprehensive and current inventories on one or two types

of resources, such as plants or historic buildings. However, no park had comprehensive and current information on all of the resources entrusted to it.

Question 33. In cases where they did not have complete information, what were the reasons?

Answer. The main reasons given were lack of funds, lack of staff, increased operating requirements, and/or more pressing priorities (usually visitor service needs).

Question 34. Beyond simple resource inventories, were managers at any of these parks able to scientifically document the condition of the resources, such as changes over time and causes of any changes?

Answer. Some park managers were able to do this for one or two very specific resources, such as a specific endangered species or water quality in a given stream. However, some park managers could not do this, and no park managers could do it for all of the resources under their care.

Question 35. What is the Park Service doing about this lack of information?

Answer. The Park Service began efforts several years ago to gather better information about the condition of its resources. For example, prototype inventory and monitoring parks were designated. As noted, however, progress has been limited and completion of baseline inventory and monitoring information throughout the Park Service is years away.

Question 36. What type of assistance has or will the National Biological Service provide the NPS in the area of collecting data on the park's resources?

Answer. We spoke with National Biological Service (NBS) officials at most of the natural resource parks we visited. They told us that, while NBS has provided or will provide parks with assistance on how to set up inventory and monitoring procedures, it is up to the parks to do the actual data collection.

Question 37. Where resources had been degraded, did parks have plans to rehabilitate or replace them? Did their plans include realistic cost estimates and time tables?

Answer. Several of the parks in our review had plans to rehabilitate resources. These plans were documented in "project statements" which detailed both natural and cultural resource repair and rehabilitation projects and their expected costs. We did not review how realistic these costs were. However, many of these projects were not fully funded and were often deferred.

Question 38. Did you encounter any recent examples where officials proceeded with resource rehabilitation or replacement without having a sound scientific basis of their action?

Answer. No, but we did not specifically address this issue.

Question 39. Your written testimony states that, in general, managers at culturally oriented parks in the study had greater knowledge about their resources than did the managers at natural resource parks. Why do you think that is?

Answer. One main reason is the nature of cultural resources. Unlike natural resources, most cultural resources are objects or structures and are therefore more easily observable.

Question 40. How do park managers prioritize science needs at the parks?

Answer. These priorities should be established in the park's general management plan or resource management plan. To the extent these plans are out of date or have not been prepared, priorities are established by the best professional judgment of park managers. Eight of the 12 parks we visited had current general management and resource management plans, but some of the parks that had current plans were not implementing them.

Question 41. Are there means to ensure that a park's total complement of natural resources is documented instead of concentrating on what might be the "favorite" species of the resident resource specialist?

Answer. Documenting the condition of a park's total complement of natural resources would likely take a greater amount of a park's budget than understanding the condition of any one species. Park managers are not currently held accountable for understanding the condition of park resources. Park Service management policy as well as resource management guidelines state that "NPS [National Park Service] will assemble baseline inventory data describing the natural resources under its stewardship and will monitor those resources at regular intervals to detect or predict changes." Therefore, park managers should be assessed on their progress in meeting this objective. However, this is not being done.

Question 42. I understand that the original request for a GAO assessment on the Health of the Parks was considerably broader than the 12-park study discussed today. Can you explain why the study's focus had to be narrowed from all parks in the system to just 12?

Answer. Early in this review, we considered a questionnaire approach that would have given us broader coverage of the entire park system. However, it would not

allow us an in-depth understanding of the conditions in parks or factors contributing to these conditions. We felt that an in-depth review of 12 parks of different types and sizes would provide a better understanding of the health of the parks.

Question 43. Do you feel the situations at these 12 parks are truly representative of the National Park System as a whole?

Answer. While not statistically projectable, this sample revealed similarities among a wide cross-section of parks. We attempted to try to get as broad a representation as possible in selecting the parks. The Director of the Park Service told us that, overall, our finding were representative of the conditions in units throughout the park system.

Question 44. On the first page of your written testimony you state that at most parks, officials lack data on the overall condition of natural and cultural resources; on page 3 you state that agency officials do not have reliable data on deferred maintenance needs. Was there any type of data the Park Service could provide you with any degree of reliability?

Answer. Regarding the type of information we needed for this review—data on the conditions and trends of resources and visitor services—the Park Service could not provide us with complete and reliable data. This review, as well as several prior reviews on a variety of Park Service programs, indicated that the agency has not collected and maintained complete and reliable data on many of its key activities.

RESPONSES OF THE GAO TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MURKOWSKI

Question 1. When the Park Service determines carrying loads for park units, what scientific basis do they use and how accurate is it?

Answer. We did not specifically address this issue. However, at least one park in our study—the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island—has a carrying load of 5,000 people per island. This number is largely based on the square footage of the islands. If the maximum is reached, which occasionally occurs in the summer, the ferries stop bringing people to the islands.

Question 2. Can you provide examples from park programs in Denali where the lack of information affects management decisions?

Answer. Park managers have increased the size and volume of vehicular traffic on the main road corridor without an understanding of the impact this might have on the wildlife inhabiting the area. One of the key objectives in the park's 1986 general management plan was to obtain an understanding of the impact of such a decision; however, this objective has not yet been completed.

Question 3. In your written testimony you spoke about cutbacks in visitor services. What types of visitor services did you review in your study?

Answer. We looked at the following types of visitor services: facilities, such as visitor centers, campgrounds, trails, roads, and bridges; personal services, such as interpretive programs (campfire talks, walks, talks); non-personal services, such as self-guided tours, exhibits, brochures; and visitor protection, such as emergency medical services, search and rescue, and law enforcement.

Question 4. Who makes the decision on what services will be curtailed or cut?

Answer. Generally, the park superintendent makes the decision as to what services will be curtailed or cut. The proposed decision may also be discussed with Park Service officials at the applicable regional office.

Question 5. Are curtailed or cut programs consistent from park to park or is there some kind of Park Service-wide priority program which would indicate what types of programs should be reduced?

Answer. Curtailed or cut programs are not consistent from park to park. The broad discretionary power of the park superintendent results in different cutbacks at different places.

Question 6. In your investigation of the Health of the National Park Service, what in your mind was the most devastating finding?

Answer. It was that the Park Service has such little knowledge of the condition or trend of the resources for which it is responsible.

Question 7. Do you agree that simply giving the Park Service more money will cure the problem? What specifically needs to be done first?

Answer. Simply giving the Park Service additional funding will not cure the problem. The Park Service needs to look for ways to operate more efficiently and improve accountability to ensure that the limited dollars are used most effectively.

RESPONSES OF THE GAO TO QUESTIONS FROM REPRESENTATIVE HANSEN

Question 1. Your testimony states that the two primary factors that have resulted in decreased funding to support visitor services in parks are enactment of additional federal mandates and increased visitation.

a. Is it also true that many of the increased costs have been driven by Administrative decisions made by the agency? For example, have the grades of park employees increased in recent years? What about costs for training and other administrative support costs?

b. What has been the financial impact of Congress adding additional park areas for NPS to administer?

Answer. a. Some of the increased costs have been—for example, the ranger promotion program and increased training requirements. However, the majority of increased costs came from the legislation we listed in our testimony. Further, for those that are administratively driven, they were initiated primarily to deal with health, safety, and liability concerns in the parks and staff upgrading and retention issues.

b. Overall, the financial impact is that additional park units drive additional infrastructure and development needs to support visitation in the parks. To the extent this occurs, it puts additional financial demands on the park system as a whole. However, it is difficult to assess the impact of this on any one park.

Question 2. Your testimony states that a primary reason that park operational costs have increased is due to the enactment of over 20 Federal laws which park managers have cited.

a. One law cited is the Clean Air Act. How does that law increase the cost of park operations?

b. How has the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 increased the cost of park operations?

Answer. a. Employee time is needed to deal with local officials, industries, etc. on potential and actual pollution activities; routine testing and monitoring for compliance, record-keeping and reporting; and mitigation efforts, to the extent that problems are identified.

b. Employee time is needed to address EEO process requirements like affirmative action plans and monitoring, merit promotion procedures, record keeping and reporting requirements, and training and mitigation efforts. These activities are all staff intensive and require employee time.

Question 3. Your testimony states that the operating budget of the NPS has outpaced inflation by nearly 20 percent in the last 10 years. Despite that fact, visitor services have been decreased in 11 of the 12 parks you visited. Could you tell me what programmatic actions the NPS has undertaken in order to ensure that its activities are more efficient and effective?

Answer. The Park Service is planning to reorganize to put more resources into the field and to reduce layers of middle management. Also, it is trying to stretch dollars by moving to a more performance-based management system. The intent in doing this is to focus more management attention on what is accomplished with the money being spent.

Question 4. It is clear that Congress has attempted to address the cut in visitor services by appropriating more funds for the agency. That simply has not worked, as visitor programs continue to be cut. Your testimony states that NPS must look for ways to operate more efficiently and improve accountability in order to ensure that limited dollars are used effectively.

Let us consider just one aspect of park operations, law enforcement. In FY 1995, the Park Service spent \$67 million on law enforcement on the 90 million acres they administer, in support of about 375 million visitors. By comparison, the Forest Service had over twice as many visitors and manages twice as many acres and spent less (only \$64 million).

Answer. Your implied question is "why does the Park Service spend so much more than the Forest Service for law enforcement?" The two agencies do have different missions, but there are some similarities between them. The Forest Service may be following a "best management practice" that the Park Service could use as well. The Park Service needs better collaboration with the other land management agencies to take advantage of what may be better management practices.

Question 5. Could you tell us the reasons that the backlog in deferred maintenance has doubled or tripled in the last 10 years despite substantial funding increases? Is it due to the same reasons which have caused the increase in the operational backlog?

Answer. Increases in visitation, operating demands, and the number of units have been the key reasons for the increase in deferred maintenance and the operational backlog. Also, as projects are deferred, the costs to complete them rises given inflation and other factors, even if no further deterioration occurs. If additional deterioration does occur, as is likely in many cases, costs rise even more.

Question 6. One of the questions which comes up regarding the closure of park facilities is the so-called Washington Monument syndrome. This term was coined by

a former NPS director in the 1960's who proposed to close the Washington Monument in response to a cut in the NPS appropriation. In your testimony you state that NPS proposes no lifeguards for the beach at Padre Island for the first time in 20 years. The closure of this primary attraction is proposed even though staffing for the park has increased substantially in the last 7 years, 35 to 53 FTE, and funding for the park has increased from \$1.2 million to \$2.1 million. When you visited the park were you convinced there was no alternative to closure of that beach?

Answer. When we visited parks, we focused on understanding the existing conditions in each park. We did not look at individual park priorities or alternatives to reductions in visitor services.

Question 7. Could you tell us why there is such variation in approach to addressing any shortfalls among the parks? For example, Shenandoah National Park responds to shortfalls in funding by closing its campgrounds and Yellowstone responds by seeking concessions to operate its campgrounds.

Answer. Given the broad discretion that individual park managers have, it is not surprising that different parks have different ways of responding to problems.

Question 8. Your statement that the condition of park resources is largely unknown calls into question the ability of the NPS to undertake their most basic mission of resource conservation. In FY 1995, Congress allocated \$172 million to the NPS for the specific purpose of resource management. Is the NPS not effectively using those funds?

Answer. Part of the problem is that the Park Service does not know how effectively funds are being used at the park level.

Question 9. Last Congress, GAO delivered a report entitled: *Activities Outside Park Boundaries Have Caused Damage to Resources and Will Likely Cause More.* The conclusions in that report were based on a survey of park managers. Since you are now calling into question whether park managers know the condition of the resources in the parks they manage, does this not call into question the results of that report?

Answer. No. In our earlier report, we developed a methodology that relied on the professional judgment of park managers to identify what the threats were and the source of those threats. We did that precisely because the parks did not have reliable data on the impact of the threat or how to deal with it.

Question 10. Shouldn't the conditions of park resources be a critical factor in evaluating the performance of any park manager? Shouldn't park managers be held accountable for the condition of their resources? How is that possible if those conditions are unknown?

Answer. Yes. Currently, however, factoring in the condition of park resources in assessing the performance of park managers can not be done. Before assessing performance, scientifically based baseline data must be collected on the inventory and condition of resources. To hold managers accountable for the condition of resources, there must be accurate data about what is there, its condition, and its trend over time.

Question 11. You state that park resource management policies at Yosemite may have had an adverse impact on an endangered species. Does anyone know for sure? Does the NPS routinely go through compliance with the Endangered Species Act with respect to its resource management programs?

Answer. In this case, it was the best professional judgment of park staff. We did not review park-by-park compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

Question 12. You state that only about 25% of a park's annual operating budget remains available to meet day-to-day needs after paying salaries and benefits. This is confusing. Aren't the workers whose salaries and benefits are included in that statistic engaged in performing the day-to-day work of the park?

Answer. Yes, they are. The point we are trying to make is that, after paying salary and related benefits, a park is typically left with about 25 percent to fund things like supplies, fuel, utilities, permits, brochures, and other items needed to operate a park.

Question 13. You state that NPS has indicated they intend to improve accountability. Did they present you with a specific outline of how they intend to accomplish this improved accountability? Have you examined their approach and do you believe it will be effective?

Answer. No. They have told us of their plans to improve accountability by moving to a system of performance contracts for employees that will help move the Park Service to a more results-oriented system of accountability as is required by the Government Performance and Review Act. It is our understanding that they have prepared draft plans to move forward. However, without good data, it will be difficult to accurately measure performance.

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